

KUTTNER: WHY THE RADICAL CENTER DOESN'T HOLD

# THE AMERICAN PROSPECT

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APRIL 2003

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the Beginning

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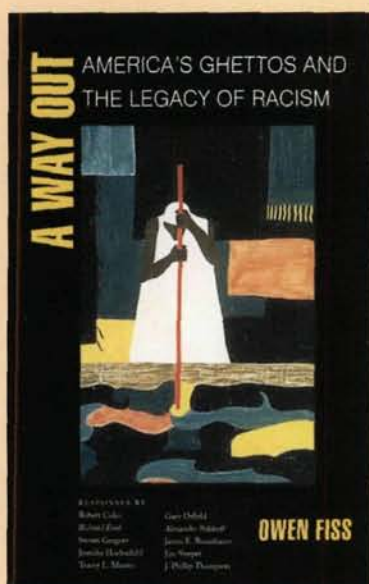
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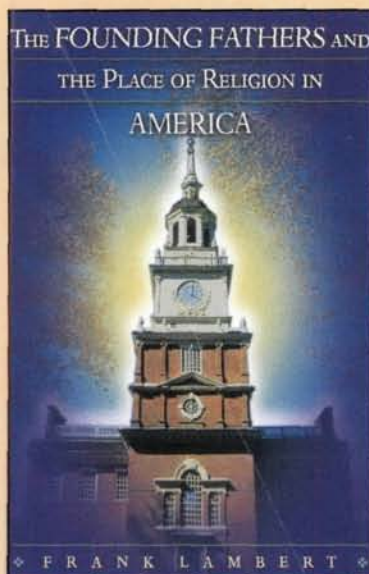
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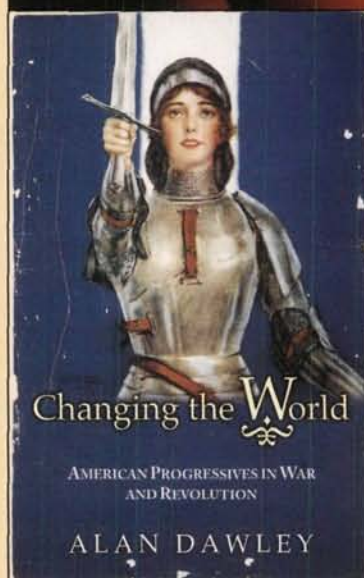
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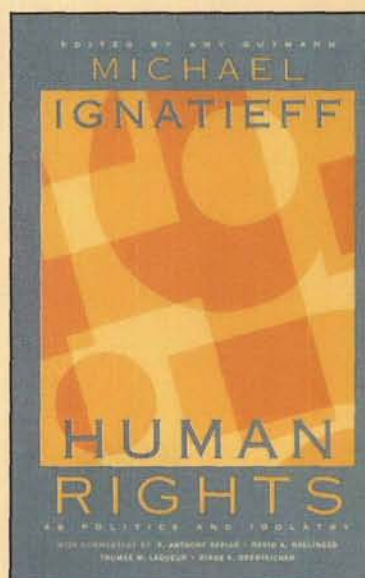
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# THE AMERICAN PROSPECT



"Even if the United States quickly ousts Saddam Hussein, the Mideast might more closely resemble the gates of hell than the new dawn." PAGE 12

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# A War for Democracy?

Like Woodrow Wilson during World War I, George W. Bush has held out the promise that by going to war, America can make the world safe for democracy. Once Saddam Hussein is ousted, we can turn Iraq into a political and economic model for

the Arab world, addressing the causes of terrorism at their roots. Some liberals who support the war are attracted by this vision—and indeed it has its attractions. But just as the outcome of World War I dashed the hopes of pro-war progressives and set the stage for an even more terrible conflict, so war in Iraq may bring not just disappointment but further cycles of bloodshed.

Deep-seated political realities ought to make us skeptical about the likelihood of an American-led democratic revolution in the Middle East. After World War I, Wilson's promises of popular self-determination were betrayed partly because America's allies had no intention of fulfilling them. In the Mideast today, the United States is similarly allied with regimes distinctly unenthusiastic about popular control, nor for that matter would we be so enthusiastic if free elections brought Islamic fundamentalists to power. Even Turkey, the one democracy among Islamic countries in the region, wants to ensure that the Kurds in Iraq don't gain independence, and the deal that the Bush administration originally made allowing Turkey to send its army into northern Iraq was a signal of predictable concessions to power strikingly similar to the pattern after World War I.

That Iraq itself has no democratic heritage is not a fatal objection to democratic hopes, but it makes the task enormously difficult. The Iraqis have no traditions of rule of law, civilian control of the military or free elections; after years of despotism and minority control, the deep suspicions among ethnoreligious groups will make it hard even to maintain the country's political stability. It's unlikely that any American administration would be prepared to stay engaged in Iraq for the length of time needed to develop a new political culture.

But the seriousness of this administration's commitment is particularly doubtful. During the 2000 campaign, Bush repeatedly disparaged "nation building," and his administration quickly lost interest in Afghanistan once the Taliban regime was toppled. In a speech at the American Enterprise Institute in late February, the president embraced the idea of making Iraq a model of freedom, but his failure to acknowledge the arduousness of the project suggests that he either doesn't grasp its complexity or was merely making an expedient argument to justify an invasion.

For those who genuinely believe we can turn Iraq into a "beacon of freedom," the great precedents are the democratization of Japan and Germany after 1945, but these examples point up how long and costly such an under-

taking might be. American forces occupied Japan for seven years, and West Germany did not become fully sovereign until 1955; both countries were long barred from fully rearming, and for decades the United States assumed much of the burden of their defense from the Soviet Union. The Japanese and German cases, moreover, are not parallel with Iraq in the most elementary respects: World War II had extinguished fascism, whereas a war in Iraq will leave undemocratic regimes standing throughout the region and inflame the forces most hostile to America.

In addition, the United States after World War II helped to establish a new framework of international security, whereas Bush's unilateralism is now weakening the institutions created at that time. If the international community had been convinced that force was necessary against Hussein, we might have shared the burdens of peacekeeping and reconstruction in Iraq, and an occupation would have enjoyed far greater legitimacy. Turning Iraq into an Anglo-American protectorate ensures that the costs and political risks of an occupation will be ours.

The entire idea of an American-led democratic revolution in the Mideast has an air of fantasy about it, as if an American military presence were likely only to inspire assimilation of our values rather than resentment of our power. It will be easier to overthrow Hussein than it will be to stop a chain of events likely to draw us ever more deeply into the conflicts of the region—especially because the hawks among us actually look forward to flexing American muscle throughout the Mideast. Soon we may be worrying about a deadly confrontation with Iran over its nuclear program. And terrorism may be less likely to subside. When al-Qaeda struck on September 11, the world regarded the United States as an innocent victim of fanaticism; by occupying Iraq, we will be helping the terrorists make the case to Islamist and nationalist forces that America is the appropriate target of their anger.

I no longer write these words with much hope that we can avert an escalating cycle of violence. As this magazine goes to press on March 11, war seems imminent, and the administration is counting on a quick victory to claim vindication and make all the earlier objections to military action irrelevant. But even a quick victory will create new dangers to our security that a wiser leadership could have avoided.

—PAUL STARR





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## Correspondence

### Let's Get Ready to Rumble!

GARANKE FRANKE-RUTA has clearly put on the brass knuckles in the battle with the Rev. Al Sharpton ["Let's Get Ready to Rumble," February 2003]. I had just returned from my college bookstore when I read the sentence about "the sort of Marxist African histories routinely sold on Manhattan street corners and taught in City University of New York (CUNY) schools." As a professor who teaches at the CUNY, I believe this is an outrageous generalization based perhaps on the spurious notions of Leonard Jeffries and others in the 1980s. It does great discredit to most of the African historians and African-studies departments I know.

I must say that the credibility of your magazine suffers by publishing the same sort of slash-and-burn statements of which your author accuses Sharpton. On the other hand, anyone who argues that Sharpton "spoiled" Ruth Messinger's chances to become mayor has a credibility problem in the first place.

ANDREW W. ROBERTSON  
*Associate professor of history, Lehman College and The Graduate Center Bronx, NY*

*Garance Franke-Ruta responds:*

I agree with Professor Robertson that some truly

wonderful professors teach at CUNY. I know this because I studied at CUNY's Hunter College in the 1990s. But I also know that a substantial portion of CUNY courses are taught by poorly paid adjunct professors with less than rigorous academic standards. The prevalence of Marxist volumes within the CUNY African-history courses I took, however, was only partly due to the fact that one teacher, an adjunct, was a self-proclaimed Marxist. Thanks to the Cold War, it is also virtually impossible to study 20th-century African history without studying the influence of Marxism on African political thought and governments. Books such as Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* and Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* remain assigned reading at CUNY and were both being sold on the street outside Sharpton's office. Meanwhile, CUNY Professor Leonard Jeffries actively generated controversy well into the 1990s; I attended a hateful lecture by him at Hunter toward the middle of that decade. As for Ruth Messinger, I argued only that Sharpton's actions helped seal her fate, reducing her chances of winning against Rudolph Giuliani from "slim to none."

Messinger ultimately lost because she was a weak candidate running against a popular incumbent.

### John Zogby's Creative Polls

TO READ CHRIS MOONEY'S account ["John Zogby's Creative Polls," February], the Zogby poll on evolution—commissioned by the Discovery Institute—was primarily about intelligent-design theory. That's not true. The chief thrust was the appropriateness of students learning the scientific evidence against as well as for Charles Darwin's theory. Mooney ignores the fact that intelligent design was a secondary issue.

Mooney also provides a definition of intelligent design that does not conform to what the theory's proponents claim, but follows instead the straw-man definition used by its most ardent opponents (e.g., Eugenie Scott of the Darwinist lobbying group The National Center for Science Education).

Worst, Mooney neglects to mention what happened in Ohio last spring as the state school board considered the issue of how to teach evolution. There the Zogby organization followed up its national poll with a statewide poll (also commissioned by us). Not only did the Ohio poll results closely resemble the national poll results, they later were effectively confirmed by a statewide survey produced by a polling company employed by *The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer*.

It appears that Chris

Mooney and *The American Prospect* are guilty of exactly the kind of unprofessional bias in journalism that they wrongly attribute to Zogby in public-opinion polling.

BRUCE CHAPMAN  
*President, The Discovery Institute  
Seattle, WA*

*Chris Mooney responds:*

Let's remember what we're talking about here. The Zogby-Discovery Institute poll I criticized asked respondents whether they thought students should be allowed to learn about "scientific evidence that points to an intelligent design of life." Intelligent-design theory, or ID, is pretty front and center in this question.

As for whether I defined ID fairly: My article notes that the American Association for the Advancement of Science has stated that ID is not science. Readers can decide for themselves whether to trust the nation's premier scientific organization or The Discovery Institute on this question.

Finally, as to the poll comparisons, I objected to the Zogby-Discovery question because it falsely suggested that actual scientific evidence points to an intelligent design for life. No question by *The Plain Dealer*, at least that I could find, was similarly flawed. So when Bruce Chapman says Zogby polls were "effectively confirmed" by *The Plain Dealer*, the key word is "effectively."



## The Taxonomist

ONCE AGAIN, ROBERT S. McIntyre is right on target ["The Taxonomist," February]. He correctly noted the faulty logic when the right wing claims that dividends are "double taxed." However, he missed an opportunity to score another direct hit on the Republicans' doublespeak. As Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) pointed out recently, if we want to eliminate "double taxation," start with the working men and women who pay the regressive payroll tax. First, take the payroll tax from their checks. Then subject their total income—with no deduction for the payroll tax already paid—to the income tax. If the Republicans want to fix double taxation, let's call their bluff and start with the payroll tax. It has a greater impact on people with low to moderate incomes than the "income" tax does. Democrats and progressives need to get the payroll tax front and center in any discussion of taxes.

JOHN MATTAR  
Belchertown, MA

## We Disport. We Deride.

WHILE TODD GITLIN'S analysis of cable news in general and FOX News in particular ["We Disport. We Deride," February] was right on, we can't afford to let ourselves believe the prem-

ise that the left's agenda is somehow fundamentally incompatible with the formats of television and radio. Yes, we're smarter, and yes, we think too hard about things at times, but there's nothing that complicated about protecting the environment, fighting for basic fairness in how money is distributed or most of the rest of our agenda. To paraphrase James Carville: It's time to quit complaining about the rules of the game and start playing it.

DAN ANCONA  
Founder, US Progressive  
Coalition  
Santa Barbara, CA

## Post-Gore Democrats

IN HIS COLUMN ON THE Democratic field for president ["Post-Gore Democrats," Jan. 13], Harold Meyerson devotes a paragraph to each candidate, except for the one candidate who brings his wish list to the table.

Gov. Howard Dean is the only candidate to vocally oppose the Bush administration's unilateral approach to foreign policy; he is the only candidate calling for a national renewable energy policy, and until recently he was the only candidate to call for a comprehensive health-care plan. Dean's candidacy merits serious consideration. He's the only one telling it like it is.

CHRISTOPHER J. CURTIS  
Portland, OR

# THE AMERICAN PROSPECT

## Dear Readers,

As you may have noticed, we are now publishing monthly. We believe that monthly frequency of the print magazine, complemented by daily updates on our Web site, [www.prospect.org](http://www.prospect.org), is the best way for us to be both current and thoughtfully influential. Circulation continues to grow and is now at an all-time high of 53,000.

We are also publishing in-depth, 24-page special reports in every other issue, such as the March special report on the right and the courts. Look for a special report on wealth in America in our May issue.

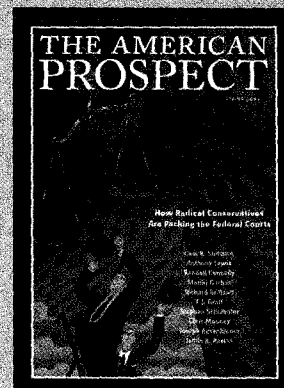
We've already received many compliments on the new design, with its expanded "Devil in the Details" section, new cultural material, livelier format and clearer typography. Please take a moment and let me know what you think of the new *Prospect*. You can email me at [BobK@prospect.org](mailto:BobK@prospect.org). As always, thank you for your continued support.

—ROBERT KUTTNER

# RIGHT-WING TAKEOVER

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# Devil in the



"And if not, imagine what the Kurds could do with a bomb." —The veep greets Turkish President Sezer in Ankara

## That Cheney Touch

NO SOONER HAD GEORGE W. Bush predicted that his war in Iraq would democratize the Muslim world than—voila!—the Turkish parliament, controlled by the pro-Islamist Welfare Party, turned against its leaders and refused America the right to use Turkey as a staging ground for an attack on Iraq. There's prophecy for you!

But it's largely self-fulfilling prophecy, for the

way the Bush administration pressured the Turkish government to admit our troops all but guaranteed a backlash. According to a report in the *Los Angeles Times*, Vice President Dick Cheney telephoned Turkey's new prime minister in early February with an ultimatum: America was on a tight timetable and needed the parliament to OK its request within a couple of days. With observant Muslim legislators already

heading home for fasting and prayer during the week-long Muslim holiday of Bayram, and with public opinion running almost unanimously against admitting U.S. forces, then—Prime Minister Abdullah Gul told Cheney he'd have to wait. But word of Cheney's attempt to rush the Turks to judgment got around, to predictable negative effect.

"The Americans kept giving ultimatums and dead-

lines, asking Turkey to jump into a barrel of fire," one Islamist legislator told the *Times*. With U.S. ships approaching Turkish shores, administration officials renewed the pressure for a quick vote—dangling \$6 billion in aid if the measure passed, threatening exile to the eighth circle of hell if it failed. By numerous press accounts, it's clear that the administration believed it had made the Turks an offer they couldn't refuse.

Yet they did (though a subsequent vote may yet be taken). Maybe the lesson is that when dealing with the prime minister of a sovereign nation, the vice president probably shouldn't treat him like a Halliburton sales rep who's not meeting his monthly quota.

## God and Country

THE 9TH U.S. CIRCUIT Court of Appeals—the sole remaining unabashedly liberal bastion in the entire federal government—has spoken, and has struck down the "under God" part of the Pledge of Allegiance as unconstitutional. John Ashcroft, of course, has countered, announcing that the government will appeal the ruling, which has been temporarily stayed, to the Supremes.

But Ashcroft is nothing if not a push-the-envelope

# Details

*"It's almost an offense if they don't listen. It's integrated into your thinking and your work."*

—STEFAN TAVROV, Bulgarian ambassador to the United Nations, on the pride his nation takes at having its mission bugged by U.S. intelligence

guy, and the *Prospect* wonders whether "under God" really goes far enough for the little deacon of Judiciary Square. "Under," after all, does not suggest any active agency; if anything, it suggests that America has the same relationship to God as it would to three feet of snow. Think of all the moral ambiguities that would be dispelled if, instead of simply sprawling "under God," like some sea-to-shining-sea linoleum flooring, America could proclaim it was "serving God." Just a one-word substitution and anyone questioning our moral bona fides could simply be referred to the Pledge.

The attorney general is not the only administration figure who may be rethinking this "under" business, however. To the neoconservative authors of last year's National Security Strategy, which proclaimed that America would not let any rival power even approach our level of might, "under" suggests a troubling subservience to an independent and uncontrollable force. Their apprehensions have only been intensified by the opposition of religious leaders to the looming war in Iraq: Hardly a day goes by when some papal emissaries, rabbinic nudnicks or Protestant goody two-shoes aren't whacking away at the president and intimating that they get

this good-and-evil stuff better than he does. The hardcore neos—Wolfowitz, Perle, Feith, our friends at *The Weekly Standard*—are secular nationalist messianics, and the last thing they want cluttering the nation's mental landscape is some rival deity identified with some gush about turning the other cheek. (The neos are not mourning Mr. Rogers.) For such as these, there's a clean and elegant solution: Lose the "under." Insert an "over."

## Your Democratic Scorecard

WITH THE DEMOCRATIC presidential field building up about as fast as U.S. forces in the Middle East, the *Prospect* intends to present our readers with regular updates on the ins and outs, ups and downs and, now and then, the rounds and throughs of this crowded race. Herewith, then, our monthly one-sentence guide on what is currently less a Hobbesian struggle of each against all than a battle of particular candidates against those fellow candidates they see as jostling for their own bit of turf.

So: Carol Moseley Braun, whatever else she may be, is clearly the anti-Al Sharpton, aiming to knock

down the Rev.'s vote totals in African American communities; Dennis Kucinich is something of the anti-Howard Dean, the purer anti-war and liberal candidate, except for his record on abortion, which might send some liberal purists into the arms of Braun were it not for her public record; Kucinich will also try to nibble at Dick

Gephardt's left-labor support inasmuch as Gephardt has nibbled at his own by backing Bush on Iraq (though Gephardt has to hope that his proposal for an international minimum wage will get him back into the game among liberals); Dean, through not-very-elliptical allusions in his speeches, has his sights set on John Kerry, whose sup-

## WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING



If all the tributaries to the Mississippi ran dry four months a year, would you consider them "isolated"?

The Bush administration would, or at least would like to. That way it could exempt them—and a whole series of intermittent streams, rivers and wetlands—from protection. In a move that's part Orwell, part Phil Gramm and part deregulatory wet dream, Bush is trying to gut the Clean Water Act by interpreting a 2001 Supreme Court decision on "isolated" wetlands in extremely broad terms.



**Bush's legacy: dirtier birds**

The case concerned only very small, isolated ponds that were dry for most of the year but filled during the migratory period for birds. The Court ruled that such isolated waters could not be protected under the Clean Water Act if the only reason was to protect the itinerant avians. Now the Office of Management and Budget has proposed a rule to redefine "isolated" so that it covers a much broader

swath of intermittently dry waterways, making them available for the disposal of industrial waste, sewage, garbage and farm-animal waste. Not surprisingly, two officials with strong ties to polluting industries are pushing for the changes. John D. Graham at the OMB's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs worked for an institute funded by Dow Chemical, DuPont and Exxon, and James Connaughton, chair of the president's Council on Environmental Quality, represented General Electric in legal battles against the Superfund. The EPA wants to tone down the draft ruling, and Russ Feingold has submitted a bill to block it. But in this administration, the crap floweth downstream.



## BRAVE NEW WORDS

**CONSERVATIONIST** *n* 1. According to a recently leaked GOP strategy memo, the term Republicans should use to identify themselves as enviro-friendly. 2. As opposed to "environmentalist," which, according to the memo, carries the "connotation of extremism."

**PRO-GROWTH** *n, adj* Supply-sider-speak for a tax cuts *über alles*, deficits-be-damned mindset. See RNC press release, "President Champions Pro-Growth Agenda."

**NEW MONEY** *n* President Bush should know the difference between old money and new. Nevertheless, in his State of the Union address, Bush pledged to add \$10 billion in "new money" to U.S. funding for global AIDS projects. In fact, next year's funds are as "old money" as a Kennebunkport garden party. Much will come from existing aid programs that combat malnutrition and prevent infectious diseases.

port in the party's dominant center-left he must erode in both Iowa and New Hampshire; Joe Lieberman and Bob Graham are in a pitched battle for Florida *alte kockers*; Kerry must impress enough labor leaders with his prospects and bona fides to block an AFL-CIO endorsement of Gephardt; Graham must quickly try to forestall southern leaders from going with John

Edwards even as Edwards must convince them that Graham's going nowhere fast; Kerry needs to convince his hi-tech backers of the menace of Edwards as Edwards needs to convince his trial-lawyer backers of the menace of Kerry; Edwards can't afford to relinquish all DLC funding to Lieberman; while, in the wings, Gary Hart and Wesley Clark each must

stake his own claim to being the tough-dove outsider to Kerry's tough-dove insider. Plus, the *Prospect's* challenge-of-the-month: Can Joe Lieberman figure a way to campaign in pork-in-every-pore Iowa without starving to death?

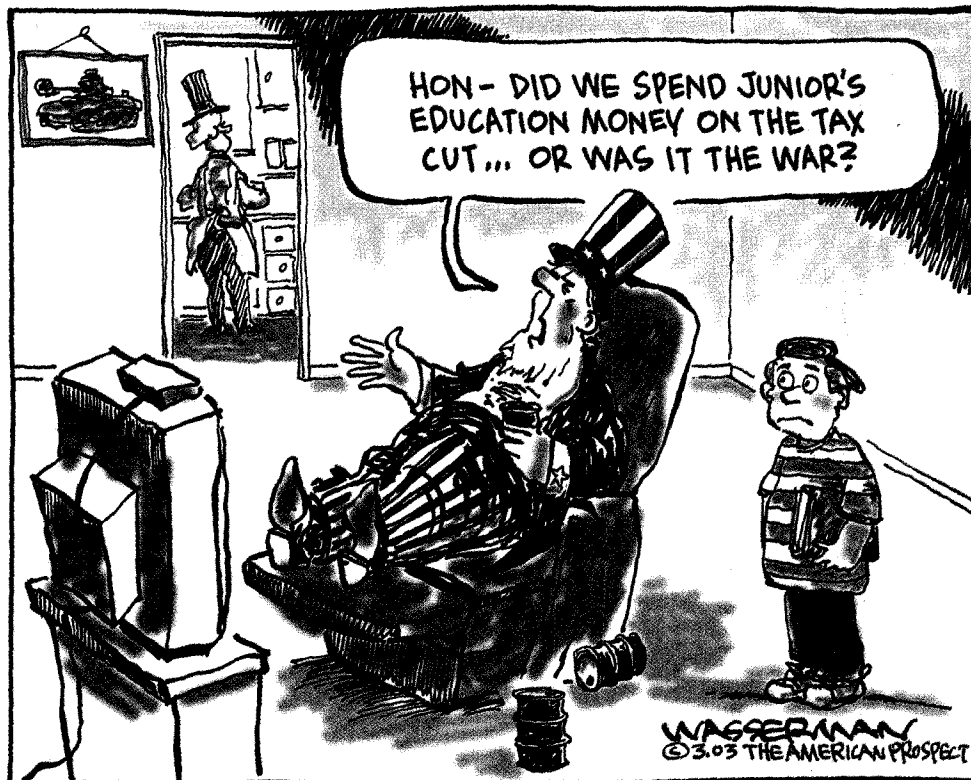
## There Goes Hoffa

SINCE HE FIRST BECAME president, George W. Bush has had two distinct approaches toward America's unions: 1) Divide and conquer, and 2) Smash them into eensy-weensy bits. Bush came to the White House armed with a Texas Republican's hatred of all things union, but what in Texas had merely been an ideological passion (unions in Texas are too small to have temporal consequences) became in Washington a strategic guidepost. For at the level of national politics, unions

mattered. Not only did they advocate such time-honored communist ploys as the minimum wage, they were the Democrats' shock troops on election day. (Hell, they were the Democrats' only troops on election day.)

Over at Karl Rove and Ken Mehlman's politics shop in the White House, a concerted effort was hatched soon after Bush took office to win over a small number of big unions—the Teamsters and the Carpenters in particular. In the 1970s and '80s, after all, the Teamsters had backed GOP presidential candidates for reasons usually related to avoidance of criminal prosecution, and the building trades, if sufficiently riled at environmentalist Democrats, had been known to look more kindly on Republicans. By calling for drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and backing Carpenters' President Doug McCarron against legal challenges from disbanded and disgruntled locals, Rove figured he could woo these unions into Bush's column.

For organized labor generally, however, the Bush administration has pursued a scorched-earth policy. Tax policy has relentlessly favored the rich, ergonomics regulations have been repealed, previously unionized workers reclassified into the new Department of Homeland Security have lost their right to unionize, the administration has announced a goal of privatizing the jobs of hundreds of thousands of other public employees, and even policies specifically sought by the Teamsters and the Carpenters (a ban on Mexican trucks, a guarantee of union wages on



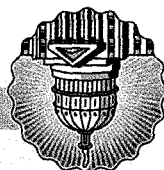
Homeland Security construction projects) have been swept aside.

The latest administration stratagem is to drown unions in paperwork: Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao has proposed new regulations requiring local unions to file forms with the Labor Department every time they spend more than \$2,000 and national unions every time they spend more than \$5,000. No equivalent filings with any agency of government are required of corporations, of course.

So it was already a fairly fraught moment when Chao, at her own insistence, appeared before the AFL-CIO executive council at its late-February meeting in Florida to pitch Bush's economic plan. But it became explosive when Chao re-



## HEROES & ZEROES



### ROBERT BYRD

Senior senator recalls function of legislature, condemns war.

### GEORGE VOINOVICH

Ohio Republican senator declares Bush tax cut too big.

### CHRIS DODD

Democratic senator decides not to run for president.

### GEORGE W. BUSH

Just kidding about disarmament; wants regime change.

### TOMMY THOMPSON

Raised cigarette taxes as governor; won't support same at HHS.

### JOHN SNOW

Treasury secretary's offhand comment sends dollar tanking.

sponded to a question from Machinists President Tom Buffenbarger about the new filing regulations by breaking out a fat white notebook and reading from a list of financial infractions by Machinist officials in recent years. (Never mind that it was the Machinists' own investigations that led to the

subsequent convictions.) Chao made clear that if anyone cared to follow up Buffenbarger's question, she had an equivalent list for every other union as well.

Chao, a stylish, petite shipping heiress who seems at ease around everyone except people themselves (her marriage to Mitch McConnell affords scant opportunity for such interaction), doubtless calculated that by inflaming the union leaders present, she'd come off as a brave little soldier in the cause of something—the double standards the administration has for business and labor, Karl Rove's political strategy, *something*. But in setting up and skewering her hosts, she may have succeeded all too well, for one leader she left livid was Teamsters President Jim Hoffa, who, after she left, excoriated the administration to an audience of his fellow presidents and suggested that his union was in the market for a Democratic alternative.

All of which may spell an end to Rove's tightrope act. It's no easy trick to clobber labor across the board and not end up smashing the unions you're trying to cultivate, which is precisely what happened in Florida. The White House has in-

## Devil in the Details

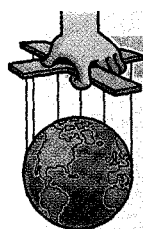
sisted that Chao was on her own at the executive council, but that runs counter to everything we know about Rove's control over all things political in this administration.

More likely, Rove may have figured that prosecuting the White House's war on unions meant Bush would lose the Teamsters and Carpenters anyway. Or it could be that even Rove couldn't figure a way to square this circle. The problem with a war on workers is that Teamsters and Carpenters are workers, too.

## Deporting Adjectives

FROM THE COUNTY THAT brought us the butterfly ballot comes this: Burt Aaronson, commissioner of Florida's Palm Beach County, wants to rename French fries. Inspired by a menu change at Cubbie's restaurant in Beaufort, N.C., Aaronson suggested that the county relabel the offensively Gaullist taters "freedom fries" or "American fries." America has a tradition of political renaming, of course. Once we entered the first World War, sauerkraut became "liberty cabbage."

And yet France is just one of at least 150 nations that seem distinctly not with us on this war question; it would be a shame—and rather Francocentric, which we certainly don't want to be—to stop the renaming there. What about Belgian waffles? Canadian bacon? Russian dressing? The Great Wall of China? For that matter, as of early March, there are about 130 U.S. cities and counties that passed resolutions against



## VAST RIGHT-WING CONSPIRACY

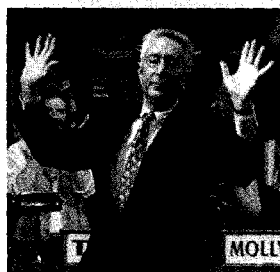
What won't the administration do to try to sell its tax cut? When the Blue Chip Economic Forecast (BCEF), a monthly survey of 53 top economists, projected a growth rate of 3.3 percent this year, the Bush administration claimed that the estimate was based on the salutary effect that

Bush's feed-the-rich tax cut would have on the economy. At this the BCEF took exception. "It sounded like the Blue Chip Economic Forecast had endorsed the president's plan," BCEF Editor Randell E. Moore told *Newsday*. "That's simply not the case." Trying to salvage something positive from the forecast, the administration now

asserts, according to the Spinsanity.com Web site, that the prediction was based on some sort of stimulus package, if not necessarily its own. Now there's an endorsement you can take to the bank.

Meanwhile, rustling up some number crunchers in whom it could actually have some confidence, the administration produced a list of 250 "economists" who support Bush.

Problem is, at least 20 of the listed "economists" don't actually have doctorates in economics. Among them are such noted experts as right-wing master strategist Grover Norquist and actor Ben Stein—who, it should be noted, is the son of the late Herbert Stein, head of Richard Nixon's Council of Economic Advisers. Whether that means the administration believes that economic expertise is conveyed genetically is anybody's guess.



Ben Stein: Roll over, Keynes



the war. Unless we want to look unduly xenophobic, we should say goodbye to Philadelphia cheesesteaks and Chicago-style pizza, too. And who said encyclicals have to be papal?

## Recalling Gray

YOU MAY HAVE THOUGHT the 2002 elections were over, but a fat lot you know. Just three months after he squeaked to victory over a certifiable stiff, California Gov. Gray Davis may be facing a formidable recall campaign. Recalls, as our more historically minded readers surely recall, were instituted to remove elected officials who'd done

something dreadful but who wouldn't be facing the voters for some time to come. In this instance, however, no one is alleging that Davis has done anything of questionable legality, much less since November. It's just that the Republicans want another shot at him, and still believe that if they'd had a sentient nominee last fall, they would have won. (Their nominee last year, businessman Bill Simon Jr., calls to mind few comparable figures in contemporary politics, but if you've ever seen Rudy Vallee playing his usual smiling, clueless, heirhead millionaire in a '30s or '40s comedy, you'll get the picture.)

The main thing Davis has had to do since November is

talk about the budget deficit, which, whether or not it goes as high as the \$35 billion he claims it does, gives everyone the willies. Already wildly unpopular for, among other things, his obsessive fundraising and the transparency of his every calculation, Davis has slumped even further in the esteem of his fellow Californians. In an early March poll conducted by the *Los Angeles Times*, 64 percent disapproved of the way he's handling his job, while just 27 percent approved. There are diseases that poll better than that.

State Republicans have nothing to offer when it comes to fixing the deficit or anything else (their insistence on closing the gap entirely through cutting spending would shut down many hospitals, some prisons and the occasional University of California campus), but they smell blood in the water. If someone will pop a cool \$2 million to fund the gathering of signatures (they need 897,000 registered voters to sign their petitions), they can force a recall election within 90 days. If the measure passes, votes will then be counted for the gubernatorial candidates whose names will appear on the same ballot, and whichever of them wins a plurality will become governor of the state that's home to 35 million people and the fifth-largest economy in the world.

The usual fruits and nuts of the California right are out beating drums for the recall, but behind them, the consultants for the handful of potentially electable Republicans in the state—chiefly, former L.A. Mayor Richard Riordan and actor-grunter Arnold Schwarzenegger—are

watching closely. The Democratic pros, meanwhile, are very nervous. "Nobody likes Gray, and we're going to have to get people to vote for him *again?*" one leading Democrat moaned while talking with the *Prospect*. "If the Republicans unite behind one candidate for what's just a 90-day campaign—and remember, Gray's spent his war chest, though he can raise a lot quickly—we'll have a huge fight, and the focus will all be on Gray, not the Reep."

Democrats will have an additional dilemma: If the recall passes, they'll need to have a popular Democrat on that ballot, too. Other Democratic statewide officials—Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante, Attorney General Bill Lockyer and the innovative, progressive Treasurer Phil Angelides—are already having to ponder whether to take the leap. And if one of them—or worse, two—decide to do it, do the Democrats put money into their campaigns or just into the drive to defeat the recall?

According to the *Times* poll, 51 percent of Californians oppose the recall effort while 39 percent support it—suggesting that angry as Californians may be at Davis, they'd be angrier still at having to go through a new election so soon after the last one. Still, these numbers probably won't deter the GOP's kamikaze right. "Meanwhile, we've got a deficit the size of the Pacific, and a state law requiring a two-thirds vote in the legislature—that means, getting some Republican votes—to pass a budget," says the Democratic honcho. "You think this is going to make that any easier?" ■



## OFF THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The Bush administration is crusading to bring democracy to the Middle East. But the region's biggest democracy, Turkey, isn't doing Bush's bidding. Despite all manner of U.S. arm-twisting and outright bribery, on March 1 the Turkish parliament narrowly refused to allow American troops to use Turkish bases on Bush's timetable. An astonishing 95 percent of Turks oppose war, according to reputable public-opinion polls, and the Turkish government is actually mindful of the views of the Turkish people. That's democracy for you.

*The Wall Street Journal* just couldn't believe it. "Rarely has short-sighted domestic politics sabotaged national interest quite as clearly as in Ankara on Saturday," thundered an indignant March 4 lead editorial. Which national interest would that be—Bush's or Turkey's?

Is it in the interest of the fledgling Turkish democracy to reject the views of nearly all its citizens? To stir up local Muslim extremists? The Turkish government has also concluded that it might not be in Turkey's national interest to inflame tensions between Turks and Kurds, which have only just been simmering down. Further, Turkey, which shares a border with Iraq, is less than thrilled about the prospect of hundreds of thousands of war refugees. And the war fever and its attendant geopolitics have set back Turkey's application to join the European Union.

It sounds like Turkey has a pretty damned clear sense of its national interest—and that the *Journal* is less interested in spreading democracy than in the United States having docile client governments throughout the region. We love reading the *Journal* because it so often gives us the sheer ugliness of administration thinking, in the raw, without the sweeteners. A few more Middle Eastern democracies like Turkey and Bush's plans will be derailed entirely. What will the *Journal* say then?

MAYBE YOU JUST DON'T **TRUST** THIS ADMINISTRATION.

THEY WANT US TO BELIEVE THAT THEIR THINKING ABOUT IRAQ CHANGED ON 9-11--

--BUT THE TRUTH IS, CHENEY, RUMSFELD, PERLE AND OTHER KEY PLAYERS HAVE BEEN PUSHING FOR A SECOND GULF WAR SINCE AT **LEAST** 1997!



ACCORDING TO SOME PEOPLE, THAT MAKES YOU A DISLOYAL AMERICAN.

TRAITOR.

UM--I'M REALLY JUST CONCERNED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF MY COUNTRY--

WHATEVER YOU SAY, TRAITOR.



WE'VE BEEN DOWN THIS PATH BEFORE, OF COURSE, DURING THE MCCARTHY ERA...AND WHILE IT'S TEMPTING TO CONCLUDE THAT WE LEARNED **NOTHING** FROM THE EXPERIENCE--

LOOK, PAL, IF YOU DON'T SUPPORT THE **PRESIDENT**, THEN YOU'RE OBJECTIVELY SUPPORTING OUR **ENEMIES**!

YOUR BOSS SHOULD **FIRE** YOUR UN-PATRIOTIC ASS! SADDAM-LOVERS LIKE YOU DON'T **DESERVE** TO HAVE JOBS!

UM--I THINK I HAVE TO GO NOW.



--**CONSERVATIVES** ACTUALLY SEEM TO HAVE LEARNED A GREAT DEAL.

BOY, NOTHING SHUTS A LIBERAL UP FASTER THAN UNFOUNDED ACCUSATIONS OF **TREASON**!

I DIDN'T EVEN GET A CHANCE TO ASK HIM WHY HE HATES AMERICA SO MUCH!



IT'S LIKE RED-BAITING--WITH-OUT THE **REDS**!

TALK ABOUT THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS!



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# A Case for Hell

BY JOHN B. JUDIS

Much of the furious debate at the United Nations has been over whether inspectors are capable of disarming Iraq, but what really divides the United States from its chief critics on the Security Council are two diametrically opposed scenarios of a post-war

Iraq. The American scenario, dubbed “new dawn,” sees a transformed Iraq leading a democratic revolution in the Middle East that would sweep away monarchs and dictators, end the isolation of Ariel Sharon’s Israel, boost oil production and bring in high-tech industry. The French and Russian scenario, dubbed the “gates of hell,” foresees a rise in Islamic radicalism and terrorism and in global economic and military instability. No one can really know what this war would bring—the repercussions from the Gulf War are still being felt—but here are some reasons why, even if the United States quickly ousts Saddam Hussein, the Mideast might more closely resemble the gates of hell than the new dawn.

## DEMOCRACY AND MODERNIZATION

The Bush administration hopes to imitate U.S. successes in establishing democracies in post-World War II Japan and Germany, but doing so in Iraq may prove far more difficult. Iraq has never experienced even a semblance of democracy. The country was knitted together by the British after World War I out of three Turkish-controlled provinces and is composed of three feuding religious-ethnic groups, the Sunnis, the Shia and the Kurds. Even though the Sunnis constitute only about a third of the population, the British, following the practice of the Turks, put this group in charge. Under Hussein they have remained so, but only by violently repressing separatist uprisings. Iraq after Saddam Hussein would be like Yugoslavia after Josip Broz Tito: It will be pulled apart by centrifugal forces. What most concerns American military strategies, for instance, is having to police a fractious post-war Iraq. Says one war college professor, “They aren’t worried about fighting Iraq but about garrisoning it afterwards.”

An invasion of Iraq could transform neighboring Arab countries, but not in ways that would fit the administration’s specifications. After the Gulf War, Islamic radicals led upheavals in Egypt and Algeria. Currently the principal opponents of the Saudi and Kuwaiti monarchies and of the Algerian, Egyptian and Pakistani governments are pro-Palestinian, pro-al-Qaeda Islamic radicals who would turn these countries further away from the West.

Bush administration officials believe that a post-Hussein Iraq would also help modernize the Mideast, but Iraq is a poor candidate for this job. Like Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, it

would depend primarily on oil revenues for its income, and like other oil-rich states, it would suffer from what economists call the “Dutch disease”—high exchange rates from its oil exports that price other potential export industries out of the world market. Even in countries such as Nigeria and Venezuela, oil wealth has undermined rather than encouraged modernization. The key to modernizing the economy of the Mideast would be to integrate the high-tech Israeli economy into the region, as some Israeli Labor Party officials advocated in the late 1990s. But that dream is unlikely to be realized by an invasion of Iraq that is meant, in part, to buttress the pro-occupation Likud Party’s rule in Israel.

## A DECLINE IN TERRORISM?

American strategists believe that by ousting Saddam Hussein, they will intimidate would-be terrorists. That might work in the short run, especially if combined with successes against al-Qaeda and with the Sharon government’s no-holds-barred military offensive in the Gaza Strip, but it’s not likely to provide a lasting solution. Al-Qaeda and other Arab terrorist groups put an Islamic gloss on Arab opposition to American and British imperialism, and to Israel as a proxy for Western imperialism. An American occupation of Iraq, along with continued backing for the Sharon government, would only strengthen this opposition. The immediate reaction could be confined to raucous but terminable street demonstrations. Yet if peoples and movements feel themselves faced with superior and unyielding military force, they often turn—as the Chechens and Palestinians already have—to terrorism.

As the Europeans have urged, the first step toward reducing terrorism in the region is not to invade Iraq but to begin resolving the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. After the Gulf War, the intifada continued to rage but was cut short by the first Bush administration’s aggressive diplomatic initiatives, the victory in 1992 of a Labor government and the subsequent Oslo Accords. If this Bush administration were to follow up a victory in Iraq with a peace offensive in Israel, it could, perhaps, begin removing a critical source of terrorism and unrest. With the pro-Likud Elliot Abrams now firmly in charge of policy toward Israel, however, the Bush administration is unlikely to pressure Israel to withdraw from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The region's peoples also have long memories. The Israelis keep believing that they have subdued Palestinian militancy only to find it returning stronger than ever. The first intifada took place five years after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon drove Yasir Arafat to Tunisia. In Iran, the United States helped engineer a coup against Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq in 1953, restoring Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi to power and helping him crush his political opposition. But the opposition finally rose up again in the late 1970s, overthrew the shah and installed a virulently anti-American regime dominated by Islamic clerics. What goes around comes around.

Of course a U.S. overthrow of Hussein wouldn't necessarily embitter the Iraqis themselves. But the specter of the United States, with Israel watching enthusiastically from the sidelines, brutally imposing its will on an Arab regime, even one unpopular with its citizens, could inspire a strong response in the Arab world that would eventually take the form of terrorism. And if an American occupation persisted in Iraq, the Iraqis, too, might turn against their would-be liberators.

### A PROSPEROUS AMERICA AND WORLD?

Bush strategists promise that a successful war would free up Iraq's oil resources and reduce world oil prices, helping to revive the flagging world economy. By contrast, the French and Russians warn of Hussein burning up his oil fields to prevent an American takeover, as he did to Kuwait's oil fields during the Gulf War. That would lead to skyrocketing energy prices and an almost certain world recession. It is impossible to say whether this will occur, but what can be said is that American predictions of an Iraqi oil boom are unfounded. According to a joint study by the Baker Institute for Public Policy and the Council on Foreign Relations, it would take Iraq as long as three years and cost up to \$30 billion to restore even the production levels it enjoyed on the eve of the Gulf War.

The war—and the resulting conflict between the United States and its European allies—could also exact other tolls on the world economy. The United States is running a huge

international-payments deficit of almost \$3 trillion. Over the next decade, that deficit could spiral upward due to irresponsible fiscal policy and to military expenditures—enlarged by the costs of occupation in Iraq and by foreign adventures in places such as the Philippines. During the Vietnam War, when the United States was running similar deficits, European pressure on the dollar helped precipitate a financial crisis in the early 1970s. The same thing could occur during the coming decade.

Such a crisis would be caused primarily by American financial overreach, but just as before it could be aggravated by geopolitical conflicts—this time emanating from the bitter UN debate over Iraq. Already European Union countries are calling for the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries to denominate oil in euros rather than in dollars, and the Chinese have floated the idea of replacing the dollar with the yuan as the East Asian regional currency. These conflicts could also spur the creation of protectionist trade and currency blocs.

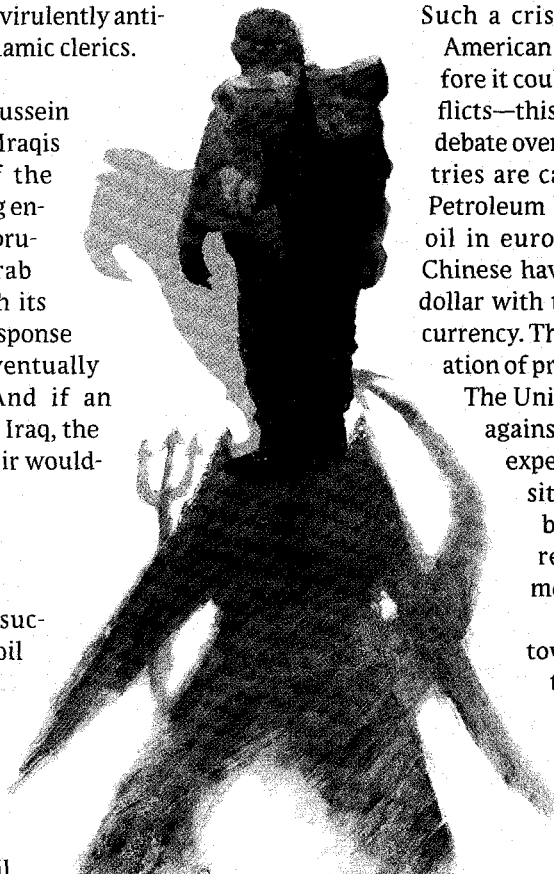
The United States is threatening to retaliate against Germany by reducing its military expenditures there, while the EU opposition to American geopolitics probably contributed to the failure of the recent World Trade Organization meetings in Tokyo.

Economists argue that the trends toward globalization will sweep away these hostilities, but as *Newsweek* columnist Robert J. Samuelson recently pointed out, the opposite could happen: The conflicts themselves could threaten the global trading and financial order, as happened on the eve of

World War I, when the world economy

was just as integrated as it is now. Who knows: Perhaps an Iraq war would turn out to be an unfortunate but forgettable interval in world history, much like the Crimean War of the 1850s. But it could also turn out to be a watershed in international relations, one in which the United States, harboring illusions of omnipotence, undermined the international institutions created after World War II, sowed decades of discord in the strategically vital Mideast and, by fatally overreaching, set itself on a path of national decline. ■

JOHN B. JUDIS is a senior editor at The New Republic.





# THE VERY BEST SENSE OF THE WORLD

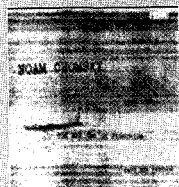
In this hilarious and inspiring talk, America's #1 Populist, Jim Hightower, launches a broadside at the Powers That Be on behalf of The Powers That Ought To Be—namely, working families, consumers, the environment, small businesses and just plain folks. He not only points out the plutocratic, autocratic and anti-democratic shortcomings of "Dubya" and his band of Bushites, He also points the way toward a revitalized Progressive political movement that is taking root across America.

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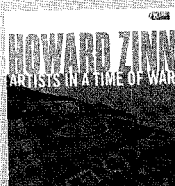
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## HEAVY DIAPYCNES

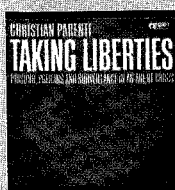
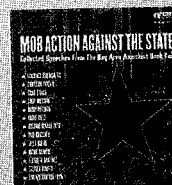
The above lists are not meant to be taken literally. For example, a species may be a diapycne in one environment but not in another. For example, *Thalassidroma* is a diapycne in the Pacific but not in the Atlantic. The species listed in the above lists are those that are most commonly found in the diapycne zone.



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**Abstract**—The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of a 12-week training program on the heart rate (HR) and heart rate reserve (HRR) of sedentary, middle-aged men. The subjects were randomly assigned to a control group (CON) and an exercise group (EX). The EX group performed a 12-week training program consisting of 3 sessions per week. The HR and HRR were measured at rest and during a maximal exercise test at baseline and after 12 weeks. The EX group showed a significant decrease in HR at rest and during maximal exercise, and a significant increase in HRR at rest and during maximal exercise, compared to the CON group. The results of this study suggest that a 12-week training program can improve the cardiovascular fitness of sedentary, middle-aged men.

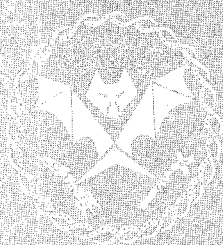
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## MOVEMENT AGAINST THE STATE

In the early 1990s, the far-right National Front, representing a new fascist dynamic, became the first openly fascist group to capture the national imagination. It was seen to have 'brought a new breed of politics back over the years, bringing Bob Hoskins, Paul McCartney, and even Ronald Reagan to the Chancellor's front door' (p. 106).



**ALEXANDER COCHRAN** (Reading in English)  
 "Many a student of mine will remember the first time he  
 sits down to read a book in English and how certain words  
 in the text are as strange to him as the letters of the alphabet.  
 It is a new world to him, and he is glad to find that he is not  
 alone in this. He is glad to find that he is not alone in this.  
 He is glad to find that he is not alone in this." *October*  
 1914, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 1-10. The author is a student of the  
 University of Chicago. **MRB 283.60:542.00**



# ALTERNATIVE CONTACT RECORDS

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

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# Dispatches



Take a hike: House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (left) makes clear his view on the need for Democrats.

## The Republican Railroad

Squelching Democratic voices on the Hill

BY MARY LYNN F. JONES

IN JULY OF 1994, JUST FOUR MONTHS before Republicans swept the elections and won control of Congress, then-Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) blasted the Democratic leadership for trying to ram health-care reform legislation through Congress without giving the minority party a chance to be heard. "It is fundamentally wrong for America," he said, "for people who are supposed to be elected every two years, who are supposed to be sensitive to the concerns and the needs of the American people, to deliberately and ruthlessly run roughshod over the American people."

But in the eight years that House Republicans have been in the majority, they've perfected the methods they once denounced—and backed off prom-

ises to improve the system. On bills such as welfare reform, the extension of unemployment benefits and the recent omnibus appropriations, Republicans have stopped Democrats from offering amendments on the floor and, in effect, made the House a one-horse show. "They've really shut down the place," says Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), a 12-term veteran. "The House of Representatives is not in any way a deliberative body anymore."

Even some Republicans are complaining. Rep. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) told *The Hill* he was furious that party leaders "waived the rules giving us three days to look" at the 3,000-page appropriations bill in February. Rep. Gil Gutknecht (R-Minn.) said the Republican decision

not to allow Democrats to offer amendments on a prescription-drug bill last year was "indefensible."

The situation is no better in the Senate. At the end of February, Committee on the Judiciary Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) violated a decades-old rule whereby at least one senator from the minority party has to vote with the majority before debate on judicial nominations can be cut off in committee. Democrats honored this rule when they were in the majority, and Republicans repeatedly used it to block nominees. In recent committee proceedings, no Democrats moved to end debate, but Hatch ended discussion and sent the nominations of three circuit court judges to the Senate floor. "I'm not going to put up with any more obstructionism," he huffed.

Republicans have also talked about using the budget process to push substantive changes that would weaken Medicaid and Head Start by turning them from federal entitlements into capped block grants. Most changes in a budget bill require 60 votes instead of a simple majority. And because no filibusters are allowed on the budget, it's the perfect vehicle for extreme Republican measures.

The budget process was intended to allocate funds to federal programs, not to substitute for the process of legislating. In effect, Republicans are circumventing the normal means of enacting legislation, in which proposed changes are vetted in committee and ordinary citizens, experts, and political supporters and opponents have a chance to weigh in. To grease the skids, Budget Committee Chairman Don Nickles (R-Okla.) has purged from his committee party moderates such as Gordon Smith (R-Ore.) and Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) who might have had second thoughts. And it could all happen very quickly: Nickles has said he wants the



Senate to act on the budget by mid-April.

Of course, while ruling the House for 40 years, Democrats used their fair share of procedural tactics to push bills through. During this time, Republicans often said Democrats were “gagging” GOP members by stopping them from offering amendments on the floor. But a recent report from Democrats on the House Committee on Rules—which decides how much time bills are given on the floor and who can offer amendments—said Republican actions are “far more egregious than any taken by Democrats in the past.” A few cases in point: When the House considered the No Child Left Behind Act, only eight of the 77 amendments Democrats offered were debated; just five of the 106 amendments they put forth on the Securing America’s Future Energy Act were heard. Keep in mind, too, that the committee has nine Republicans to

ing tough votes and instead toe the party line. As Frank explains it, “They vote for procedures that prevent amendments from coming to the floor. Then they vote for the bills unamended and say, ‘Well, I had no choice. I would have been in favor of an amendment, but it wasn’t offered.’”

The fact that Republicans actually picked up seats in last fall’s election has only emboldened them, as shown by the new rule changes. As Rep. David Obey (D-Wis.), the ranking member on the House Committee on Appropriations, told *The Washington Times* in January, “We don’t expect to win, but we do expect to be able to at least offer amendments so the two parties can define their differences.”

“What are they afraid of?” House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) asks of the Republicans. “That reasonable, bipartisan solutions might prevail?”

## **Republicans are crafting bills with the input of only one party, disenfranchising Democratic lawmakers—and the people who sent them to Congress.**

four Democrats. As the Democrats’ report states, “We consider this trend to be dangerously close to a willful silencing of those voices that do not share the point of view of the Republican leadership.”

The situation is only getting worse. In the past, Democrats were at least able to count on getting their views across at the committee level. But rules adopted at the start of the 108th Congress limited their ability to force votes even there. Committee chairs can now postpone a vote on an amendment until they are sure they have the votes to win. That means that even though Democrats can offer alternatives at the committee level, their proposals won’t necessarily get a fair hearing.

Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas), who became House majority leader in January, is largely to blame for squelching the minority opinion. His brass-knuckle tactics have made Republicans afraid to cross party leaders on procedural votes so that moderate Republicans—a potential block of swing voters—never have to choose on difficult, substantive amendments; they can thus avoid cast-

BESIDES CAUSING DEMOCRATS FRUSTRATION, what’s the effect of having such a one-sided debate? Plenty. In the prescription-drug bill that passed the House last June, for example, the government would have given subsidies to insurance companies and allowed them to change premiums and other coverage. The Democratic alternative, which wasn’t allowed on the floor, would have given everyone the same premiums and benefits. (The GOP bill was ultimately never signed into law, but some version of it will be back later this year, and Republicans are likely to employ similar tactics.) On the omnibus appropriations bill, many lawmakers are just now finding out what exactly was in it—even though they already voted on it. Funding for important programs such as community policing and adult job training declined. Important areas that Republicans claim to want to fund, such as education, got shortchanged.

Democrats have also been forced to vote for bills that they would otherwise oppose. Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), the House minority whip, voted for the appropriations measure even though he

was deeply unhappy about what he called the “worst process” he’d seen in 22 years. (By the time the bill passed the House, the current fiscal year was more than 4 months old, and lawmakers had little choice but to pass a bloated bill.)

Playing games with the rules process has another harmful effect: It increases partisan acrimony in an already contentious chamber. “It’s my way or the highway, take it or leave it on this legislation,” said Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) in characterizing the prevailing mood. Party-line votes are becoming increasingly common in the House. The rules changes in January—which also included permitting lawmakers to accept free trips to “charitable” events at resorts and allowing staffers to eat free pizza catered by special-interest groups—were approved 221-to-203. A Democratic effort to add funds to help New York City recover after September 11 and to bolster defense and homeland security in November of 2001 was defeated 216-to-211. Republicans and Democrats have little reason to try to forge consensus when they’re constantly at extremes.

Yet the most disturbing result is the most far-reaching: By crafting bills that include the input of only one party, Republicans are disenfranchising Democratic lawmakers—and the millions of people who sent them to Congress. It’s a matter that concerned then-Rep. Gerald B.H. Solomon (R-N.Y.) in 1993. “The people and their representatives are not even being treated as second-class citizens; they might as well not be citizens at all given how little impact they have on shaping legislation in the House,” he said. “If that is not undemocratic, I would like to know what is ...” When Solomon became Rules Committee chairman at the start of the 104th Congress, he vowed that his committee would allow for an open amendment process in 70 percent of the bills reaching the House floor. In the 107th Congress, just 28 percent of those bills were open to amendment.

SO WHAT CAN DEMOCRATS DO? FOR one thing, they can get out in front of Republican proposals. If Democrats aren’t able to have as much say at the end of the process, they should make every effort to have more input at the

beginning. They did that by unveiling their economic-stimulus plan before President Bush released his proposal, and also by giving a “prebuttal” to the State of the Union address. Democrats can hold more press conferences to call attention to positions that aren’t getting heard on the floor, and they can raise issues more vociferously in committee.

But real change isn’t likely to come until Democrats win back control of Congress, and with it the committee chairmanships and the ability to set the legislative agenda. The House, as Rut-

gers University political scientist Ross Baker describes it, is “one of the principal examples of majority tyranny in the United States.” The minority party doesn’t have many options. And with the Senate in Republican hands, House Democrats can no longer rely on their Senate counterparts to moderate bills or kill them. That means there won’t be a truly open debate on Capitol Hill until at least 2005. ■

MARY LYNN F. JONES is a Prospect senior editor.



The check is in the mail: Bush and South African President Thabo Mbeki

## The Fakeout

Bush promised billions for AIDS—but not until he’s left office.

BY GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH’S GLOBAL AIDS-relief proposal seemed like a historic announcement. “[T]o meet a severe and urgent crisis abroad, tonight I propose the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief—a work of mercy beyond all current international efforts to help the people of Africa,” Bush said during January’s State of the Union address. “I ask the Congress to commit \$15 billion over the next five years, including nearly \$10 billion in new money, to turn the tide against AIDS in the most afflicted nations of Africa and the Caribbean. This nation can lead the

world in sparing innocent people from a plague of nature.”

Yet within weeks, serious questions have emerged about whether Bush’s commitment was for real—or just another instance of the president talking a good game in public while crossing his fingers behind his back. For one thing, Bush’s refusal to allow funds to go to integrated public-health clinics that mention the word “abortion” will undercut much of the Third World’s AIDS-preservation and condom-distribution infrastructure. For another, advocates are increasingly concerned about the

actual amount of new money and when it will be delivered.

According to an analysis by the Open Society Institute (OSI), only \$8.5 billion of the \$15 billion pledge is actually “new money.” The rest of the nearly \$10 billion that Bush promised consists of funds previously committed by the administration in June for a multiyear program to prevent pregnant women from giving HIV to their babies, as well as continued funding for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis & Malaria that the United States began financing two years ago.

More significantly, \$6.8 billion of the new \$8.5 billion is not slotted to come up for appropriation until the fiscal year 2006–2008 period, according to the OSI. After that, says Dr. Paul Zeitz, the executive director of the Washington-based Global AIDS Alliance and a former United States Agency for International Development (USAID) worker in Zambia, it could take up to a year for the funds to wend their way from the halls of Congress into the hands and lives of Africans afflicted with HIV. That means about 80 percent of the new money Bush is proposing in his “Emergency Plan” will not reach African hands until around the 2007–2009 period. By then, according to the United Nations Joint United Programme on HIV/AIDS, most of the 21 million Africans projected to contract HIV by 2010 will have already become infected.

“The spirit of the president’s announcement is fantastic, but we need to see the implementation applied in the early years as well as the later years, because this is a progressive epidemic,” says Jamie Drummond, executive director of Debt, AIDS, Trade in Africa, U2 singer Bono’s AIDS and development advocacy organization. “The more you put out the forest fire earlier, the less you have to put out later.”

WHEN BUSH MADE HIS ANNOUNCEMENT, many observers responded with astonishment and rapturous praise for the president. “As someone with HIV, I listened to his words and found my throat catching,” wrote gay conservative blogger Andrew Sullivan. *The New York Times* hailed Bush’s proposal in an editorial, saying it “finally provides a response from Washington commensurate with the disease’s catastrophic



scale." "Billions in tax-payer money," gushed columnist Michael Kelly. "For condoms in Africa. In a recession. In a time of record budget deficits. It is a rare and wonderful thing." Even *The American Prospect* caught the fever, dubbing Bush one of our monthly "heroes" in the March issue.

With the State of the Union address, Bush formally made AIDS part of his "compassion agenda," the catch-all budgetary category the conservative president uses to substitute high-profile, targeted charity for society-wide, consistent public investment. But the AIDS issue is rapidly becoming one where the president's compassionate agenda and his conservative principles collide. At issue is the always-controversial matter of abortion.

In February the administration announced that it hoped to extend to international AIDS care and prevention groups the so-called Mexico City policy—or global gag rule—of prohibiting groups or programs that promote or perform abortions from receiving U.S. funding. The directive, in effect since President Ronald Reagan announced it in Mexico City in 1984, had previously only encompassed international family-planning centers. The administration has not issued a formal clarification detailing how the policy will operate within the AIDS arena, leaving legislators and activists alike confused as to how the expansion will affect AIDS programs.

Because the trend in many African nations is toward integrated health services, the administration's push for centers to separate their services into AIDS and abortion-discussing programs could profoundly delay implementation of any AIDS programs using the new funds—and also throw programs accustomed to receiving U.S. AIDS dollars into disarray. Meanwhile, abortion-rights and anti-abortion members of Congress are busily debating a series of amendments to upcoming global AIDS bills to deal with the abortion issue. Though the abortion-rights side looks to have enough support in the relevant committees to write amendments blocking the gag rules, such amendments—or anti-abortion ones—would assuredly engender strong opposition and complicate the fate of the bills as they reach the House and Senate floors.

The record budget deficits and lin-

gering U.S. economic woes have also had an impact on the president's plan. Bush's proposal is backloaded, requesting only \$450 million in additional money this coming year. Though the administration claims that it has requested \$2 billion for AIDS in Africa in the fiscal year 2004 budget, not all of that money is targeted to people with HIV, people at risk for HIV or Africans. Some \$105 million of the proposed funds is slated to go to programs to treat tuberculosis and malaria, and \$361 million is earmarked for the National Institutes of Health's and Centers for Disease Control's AIDS research—not treatment or prevention. Meanwhile, the new "emergency" bilateral funding for AIDS, to be funneled through USAID, was offset by cuts of \$146 million to USAID's child-survival, maternal-health and infectious-disease programs, leading development advocates to charge that the president was robbing Peter to pay Paul within the foreign-aid budget.

Also controversial is the question of how much to give to the Global Fund for treatment and prevention projects. The fund, which last year gave out its first round of grants, is becoming the leading multilateral agency to directly fund AIDS programs around the world. The United Nations AIDS Program primarily provides technical assistance to affected nations, and the World Health Organization's Global Program on AIDS,

which used to provide direct program funding, was disbanded in 1995. Around 60 percent of Global Fund monies were devoted to AIDS last year, and about two-thirds of AIDS dollars go to countries in Africa. The president has proposed allocating \$200 million per year for the next five years to the fund. This would represent a *decrease* in dollars from the \$350 million that Congress approved for the Global AIDS Fund in the fiscal year 2003 budget, and a flatlining of funding thereafter.

AIDS advocates have requested that the United States contribute \$2.5 billion per year directly to the Global Fund, and Sens. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) and John Kerry (D-Mass.) proposed legislation last year to support that goal by giving the fund \$2.2 billion over a two-year period. Congress opposed the bill and Frist, bowing to presidential pressure, has toned down his support for the multilateral approach since becoming Senate majority leader. This year, Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.) has proposed giving the fund \$1 billion more than the president has requested, but the ultimate appropriations amount is far from certain.

One thing, though, has already become readily apparent. "Bush's words are quite eloquent but his actions are not meeting up with the crisis," Zeitz said. ■

GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA is a *Prospect* senior editor.

## Freedom to Fail

The false flexibility of the president's welfare plan

BY DRAKE BENNETT

AS ANY ADVOCATE FOR THE POOR WILL tell you, measuring the success of welfare reform depends on how one defines success. If it's simply a matter of cutting the welfare rolls, the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program has been the social policy equivalent of winning the space race. Between 1995 and 2001, the number of welfare recipients nationwide fell more than 50 percent after having grown steadily for decades. If success means anything broader, however, the record is somewhat less spectacular. Poverty is

down and employment in single-parent families is up (no shock after an unprecedented economic boom), but not nearly in proportion to the drops in the rolls. And these indicators have all started heading in the opposite direction in the past two years.

The fight over TANF's reauthorization, like the debate over its record, also turns on a semantic pivot: that of flexibility. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act that Bill Clinton signed into law in 1996 ended welfare as a federal entitlement

program and turned the money over to the states as fixed block grants. The idea was that the states, Louis Brandeis' "laboratories of democracy," would let a thousand innovative policies bloom.

And it came to pass—sort of. The birth of TANF served as a kind of Homestead Act for welfare reformers. From job-search seminars to drug-rehab programs to workfare to giving private companies such as Lockheed Martin a chance to run TANF employment programs, there's very little that hasn't been tried. Some of it has been heartening and some of it harrowing, but the system as a whole is nothing if not flexible, the sort of loose confederation of social entrepreneurs a Milton Friedman would love.

This year, however, may see the end of welfare reform as we know it. The original TANF funding ran out last year, and, unable to agree on reauthorization, Congress has repeatedly punted, passing a series of continuing resolutions to extend the life of the program by a few months at a time. Now, with Republicans firmly in control and President Bush egging them on, Congress seems set to produce something more long term. In mid-February, the House passed a bill nearly identical to the one it approved last May—which in turn closely tracked the proposal Bush made the previous February. Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) has made passage of a Senate bill one of his top priorities as majority leader.

One would think that an administration that has proven reluctant, if not hostile, to the regulation of pollution, workplace safety and magical-realist accounting practices wouldn't want to interfere in the welfare programs of the states. But, as he has made clear, Bush believes the states have abused the leeway that's been given them. In a speech in South Carolina last July, he charged: "States require work of only about 5 percent of the adults on welfare. In other words, the goal is incredibly low." (He doesn't mention that most programs far exceed those targets: The Department of Health and Human Services' most recent report puts the actual percentage of welfare recipients in work or work-related activities at upward of 34 percent.) Despite his misgivings, however, Bush says he still believes in the states. "Congress," he said, "must always remember that when they write law, that we've got to trust

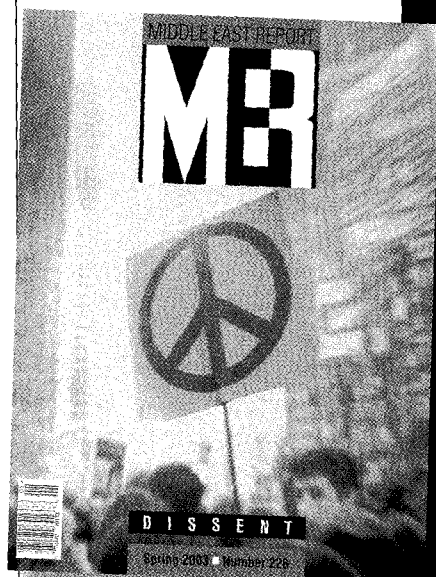
the local folks, as well; that one size doesn't fit all when it comes to trying to help people help themselves."

But what about his plan's vaunted flexibility? Apparently it doesn't apply to the matter of work hours. Under Bush's proposal, states would be penalized if they didn't have 70 percent of their welfare recipients working by 2007. Right now the requirement is 50 percent, though the precipitous drops in welfare rolls in the late 1990s exempted most states from it. In addition, Bush's plan would raise the number of work hours required per family. Currently it varies between 35 hours for a two-parent family to 20 hours for a single parent with a child under six. In his estimation, a 40-hour workweek is "the definition of work."

That's not the only defining he does. Programs such as vocational training, bilingual education and drug treatment that states have set up to try to address enduring barriers to employment could only count in a limited way toward the new work requirement. All in all, according to a National Governors Association survey, welfare officials in 35 states believe they will have to make "fundamental changes" to their programs if the Bush plan becomes law. And welfare recipients will suffer as a result. "The National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies," the largest study of its kind, found that combining education and job-search programs had the most success in placing welfare recipients in well-paid and stable jobs.

Plus, in a tough labor market there may not be enough jobs to meet the 70 percent bar. As a result, states would be forced to create publicly funded work programs, or workfare. David Ellwood, a professor at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and a Clinton welfare adviser (who left the administration deeply disappointed with TANF), says, "Workfare doesn't work; they're make-work jobs. That's how states are going to increase employment in the middle of a recession: make-work jobs." States and localities have largely come to the same conclusions themselves. Those that have tried workfare have dropped it, partly due to the administrative costs and bureaucratic headaches and partly because workfare has proved remarkably inef-

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fective at getting people into real jobs.

And then there's the cost. Bush is freezing the TANF funding levels right where they are, which, with inflation, amounts to a de facto cut. But the Congressional Budget Office predicts that over the next five years, the new work requirements would cost \$8 billion to \$11 billion more than the current TANF budget, mostly on increased child-care costs and workfare programs. Because the entire yearly block grant is \$16.5 billion, that's quite a shortfall.

Which brings us to the alternate definition of flexibility. Tucked away in the administration proposal and the House bill is a provision for "superwaivers" that would allow states to petition the federal government to circumvent federal rules, not only in TANF but in food stamps, public-housing programs, the Workforce Investment Act and elsewhere. A governor who wanted to reroute funding from one of those programs or sought to make deeper cuts than the law allows would simply have to petition the appropriate federal department. Congress wouldn't be able to do a thing about it.

As a result, with pinched budgets and overwhelming work requirements, the states' ability to innovate would be increasingly focused on finding creative ways of reducing welfare recipients' claims. Some might try, for example, merging TANF and the Food Stamp Program, thereby applying TANF time limits and work requirements to food-stamp eligibility. Or a state could apply to raise public-housing rents above the congressionally mandated level. The more dire a state's fiscal situation (and right now, for most of them, it's more dire than at any time in 50 years), the more creative its cost-cutting measures are likely to be. And it's not hard to see this administration, as assiduous as it has been in pressuring states to cut spending in such programs as Medicaid, allowing all sorts of dubious innovations.

What the superwaiver amounts to, as Deborah Weinstein of the Children's Defense Fund puts it, is "a very one-way kind of flexibility: the flexibility to cut." By contrast, the administration has doggedly opposed any suggestion that states get normal, old-fashioned waivers allowing them to keep welfare programs that didn't meet the new work requirements.

According to Shawn Fremstad of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, there is "plenty of flexibility already in programs like Food Stamps." The only reason to propose a superwaiver, then, is to open the door to some truly radical measures, the sorts of things that would never get through Congress. As Ellwood sees it, the measure is an administrative flanking maneuver, a means to attack "popular programs that are much harder to reduce or dismantle" through the legislative process.

If so, it couldn't come at a worse

time. The great experiment of welfare reform took place in almost absurdly favorable economic conditions. With the boom over and the welfare rolls starting to rise again, TANF is just now being challenged. President Bush says he wants a flexible program, but whether we end up with the flexibility to combat poverty or simply the flexibility to cut funding may determine whether the system bends or breaks. ■

DRAKE BENNETT is a Prospect writing fellow.

## Asylum Interrupted

Is America still a safe haven?

BY ALEX GOUREVITCH

THE UNITED STATES HAS NEVER OPENED its arms to immigrants seeking asylum. Before September 11, aliens would arrive only to be shackled and handcuffed to an airport bench, suffer through multiple interviews, wind up in a county jail or private correctional facility, and finally file their cases before an immigration judge. Sometimes an asylum seeker would get released on parole, but just as often, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) would keep him in jail for the length of his case. And if he won, he'd be among the lucky third of those who win freedom.

But things have gotten even worse since 9-11. Now the INS is able to detain aliens more often and for longer. It's also harder for the undocumented to get a fair hearing if they appeal their cases. These changes have not only hit asylum seekers hard, they've also set troubling precedents for civil liberties. For a nation that's supposed to be a beacon of freedom, these new hurdles are nothing less than cruelly ironic.

The post-9-11 changes began in December 2001. After the INS intercepted a boatload of about 170 Haitian asylum seekers off the coast of Florida, it immediately placed them in detention without parole. The INS claimed that if it didn't treat the Haitians harshly, other would-be immigrants would follow their example. At first the INS said that deterring the so-called

"mass migration" was in the Haitians' interest. After all, crossing the seas was a dangerous route to freedom.

But the INS' response to another group of Haitians suggested that it was really motivated by what it saw as national-security concerns. This second encounter occurred last October, when about 200 Haitians swam ashore near Key Biscayne, Fla. The INS responded by declaring that all future asylum seekers arriving by boat would undergo mandatory detention and likely face quick deportation. The INS also invoked a post-9-11 authority allowing it to keep the Haitians in detention even when a judge ruled that they could be released on bond. This "bond stay" authority differs from pre-9-11 rules, which stated that the INS could only keep asylum seekers in jail if it could show that they constituted a security risk. Now the INS doesn't even have to show any evidence. Attorney General John Ashcroft has effectively allowed the INS to overrule immigration judges and detain aliens indefinitely—on no more than a hunch. "[Bond stay] was clearly aimed at removing any check on INS detention authority," says Eleanor Acer, director of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights' Asylum Program.

Under pressure from immigration advocates to explain its actions, the INS eventually admitted that it was worried that dealing with asylum seekers was

taking away resources from the war on terrorism. Specifically, it said, asylum seekers were distracting the U.S. Coast Guard and the INS from patrolling for terrorists. "We can't divert resources from protecting our borders and ensuring the safety of the American people to stopping mass migrations," says Jorge Martinez, a Department of Justice spokesman. "That is the primary goal of [these regulations]." But the occasional boatload of 200 people is hardly a mass migration, and Haitians pushed out by political unrest aren't going to be deterred by the possibility of detention. Acer notes that applying the post-9-11 regulations to the Haitian situation sets a worrisome standard for the exercise of executive power, stretching the definition of a security threat to include enforcement issues such as asylum. Powers once restricted for exceptional circumstances can now be used for more routine law-and-order objectives.

Of course, the increased detention rates since September 11 are also partly due to a lack of coordination. In places such as New Jersey and New York, INS district directors have used their discretion to detain asylum seekers even when the aliens posed no known risk and central guidelines recommended that they be released. "The problem was so severe at one point that the INS issued a regulation just to make clear that INS officials had the authority to release someone on parole," Acer says. And even when the INS has been ready to release detainees, massive delays in getting new security clearances have meant weeks of additional jail time. These delays aren't just a problem for asylum seekers; they're a hindrance for all foreign visitors, especially because the security checks were set up without adequate money, staff and training. Just as disturbing, various experts say nobody outside the government knows who is responsible for the delays. That's made it hard for foreigners to claim what few rights they have, especially while in jail. The solution, says Acer, is to prioritize asylum seekers "so the checks can be done on a timely basis." But, so far, Bush hasn't done anything about it.

The administration *has* said that the new moves are necessary precautions. But it's not as if asylum seekers just strolled into the United States before 9-11—they were already one of the

most extensively screened groups entering the country. Two 1996 laws—the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act—had already made the asylum system arduous and punitive. Among other things, these laws expanded the government's removal-and-detention powers and limited appeals. That's turned the immigration detention system, which includes asylum detention, into the fastest-growing prison system in the United States today. Initial admissions to detentions for all immigrants have grown 136 percent since 1994, and the INS removal-and-detention budget has ballooned from \$239 million in 1994 to \$1.1 billion in 2002. Just how many people seek asylum is hard to say, given that the government keeps poor statistics. But most estimates place new cases between 45,000 to 70,000 people annu-

## Recent laws have turned the immigration detention system, which includes asylum detention, into the fastest-growing prison system in the United States.

ally. Only about a third of them are granted asylum.

But the problems for asylum seekers don't stop at detention. Ashcroft has also undermined their ability to get a fair appeals hearing. If an immigration judge denies an asylum case, the individual can appeal to the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA). The problem is, the BIA is understaffed and has been swamped with tens of thousands of backlogged cases. (About 40 percent of all BIA cases are asylum cases.) In August of last year, Ashcroft decided to get rid of the backlog by fiat, mandating that the BIA sort through all old cases by March 25. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, denial rates for appeals skyrocketed from 59 percent in October 2001 to 86 percent a year later. Few immigration-law experts think aliens are being allowed true due process. "People are under pressure, and it's much easier ... to deny than it is to grant," says Laurie Rosenberg, a seven-year member of the BIA who left this year. "You have to jump through a lot of hoops to reverse a decision, and cases are gone through very quickly." Ashcroft has made it even harder by more than

halving the number of BIA judges from 23 to 11. That leads Rosenberg to think that the backlogs will reappear and that cases will languish. And, once again, Ashcroft's decisions erode a check on the executive branch.

Many of the government's post-9-11 activities have focused on populations— asylum seekers, illegal aliens, foreign Muslims and Arabs—that enjoy few legal defenses. They usually come to the United States without money to afford legal representation and the state isn't required to provide them with counsel. Moved from one detention facility to another, even detainees who can afford lawyers have a hard time maintaining contact with them. This vulnerability gives the administration a chance to interpret statutes in broader terms than would be possible against U.S. citizens. Already Ashcroft has set legal precedents on the use of secret evidence and

the suspension of habeas corpus in cases involving other foreigners in immigration courts. That makes the outcomes of many asylum cases not only a humanitarian question but also a general issue of security versus liberty. And it makes sense to ask now, not later, whether the extra security is really worth the reduced liberty.

Even the one post-9-11 change that could help asylum seekers may turn out to be cold comfort. On March 1, the INS was folded into the newly created Department of Homeland Security—taking it out of Ashcroft's hands. It's too early to tell what the consequences will be. But a department with the name "security" in its title is still likely to treat asylum seekers as potential terrorists first and foreigners seeking freedom second. And there's no reason to think the tenor of the administration's policies will change. Only George W. Bush has the power to make liberty and refuge higher priorities in his administration. Don't hold your breath. ■

ALEX GOUREVITCH is a Prospect writing fellow.



# Dissent in America

BY MICHAEL TOMASKY

The shooting may or may not have started by the time you read this. But one thing that has certainly begun is the campaign to force dissenters to keep it zipped when the shooting commences. "Once the war against Saddam [Hussein] begins, we expect

every American to support our military, and if they can't do that, to shut up," bayed Bill O'Reilly on his Feb. 26 cable show. "Americans and, indeed, our allies who actively work against our military once the war is under way will be considered enemies of the state by me." This was a tad demagogic even by O'Reilly's virtually nonexistent standards, so the next night he toned it—very marginally—down. He said he won't think of dissenters as un-American, just as "bad" Americans. But he reiterated that "it is our duty as loyal Americans to shut up once the fighting begins, unless facts prove the operation wrong, as was the case in Vietnam."

(It took roughly four years for a majority of Americans to decide that "the facts" dictated that the Vietnam War was wrong. By that time, more than 30,000 U.S. soldiers and perhaps three-quarters of a million Vietnamese had irretrievably lost the ability to voice an opinion one way or the other.)

Never to be out-demagogued on such questions, Andrew Sullivan chirped in: "If [protesters] go ahead and try to impede those people in the military doing their jobs, if they launch a 'stop-the-war' movement after it has begun and American and British lives are at stake, it strikes me that they will massively overplay their hand. It took a long time in the Vietnam War for people to start campaigning against an existing war, and longer still for some to withhold support from the troops facing battle. If the anti-war brigades decide to cross that line instantly, then the backlash could be enormous. And deservedly so."

It gets worse still. Michael Savage, the new hero of right-wing talk and the unchecked id of these gruesome shills and mercenaries, has gone the full distance and explicitly raised the notion of reintroducing the Sedition Act, which silenced dissent during the waning days of World War I. He also called for the arrest of protesters. And finally, some other savage who goes by the name of Coulter has another "book" due out in June, this one called *Treason*. It is not about the Rosenbergs.

This is a small sampling, and once the shooting does start—and the countervailing protests, which will be immediate—this kind of chest thumping will only get more insistent. Keep an eye open for the demagogue's standard tricks, the main one of which is on display in the O'Reilly

and Sullivan quotes above—to wit, intentionally blurring the line between protesting and harming the military. Impeding the military means giving away troops' positions and interfering with their progress; that's treason, or something very close to it, and we all agree that's bad. (The *Prospect's* Web log, *Tapped*, properly rebuked the "human shield" movement.) Protesting is ... protesting. And, as this generation's demonstrators have made clear, the beef is not with the men and women in uniform. It's with the men and women in civvies at the top (who, with the lone exception of Colin Powell, have always managed to find ways around having to wear their country's uniform).

It's very clear what kind of America these people want. First and foremost, they want an America in which such crackpot musings can continue to bag them viewers and readers, and sadly, they have that. Beyond that, they want an America in which their opponents are at least afraid of them and at most prohibited from saying what they believe. They can't come out and say that in America, at least so far. For now, they just float the notion and see if it takes.

And I guess we will see. But they might be surprised. I've been scanning the Web in an admittedly unscientific search for such foul sentiments being expressed in local papers, and thankfully, I haven't found much. That's not to say some won't appear, or there won't be regions of the country where the dove might be well advised not to shout his opinions down the length of the shopping mall.

But it is to say this: We have reached a point now in this country where the shouting right-wingers who dominate the airwaves are more conservative than the country at large. The salons of Washington and New York, so long derided as redoubts of a fey and irresolute liberal elite, are now more tolerant of this kind of bullying than normal everyday newspapers in middle America (think about *that* for a while). It looks like those "real Americans" these charlatans are always purporting to speak for have a better understanding of what being an American really means. ■

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MICHAEL TOMASKY, *New York magazine's* political columnist, is currently a Shorenstein Fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

# Bush's Tax Missimplification

BY ROBERT S. MCINTYRE

As we file our often complicated income-tax returns this April, should we take heart that President Bush's budget includes a section titled "Simplify the Tax Laws"? Not really. Elsewhere in the budget are some five dozen proposed tax breaks that would

cram even more lines onto the already overcrowded Form 1040. But Bush's feigned call to simplify is much worse than mere chutzpah.

Of Bush's three so-called simplification measures, one is trivial, one is nothing but a sop to a few very well-off taxpayers and one is truly insidious.

The trivial item involves the tax code's definition of "dependent child." Currently there are two slightly different rules. To qualify for the \$3,000 per-child exemption, the \$600 child tax credit and the day-care credit, parents must provide more than half of their children's support. In contrast, parents who claim the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and single parents who file as "heads of household" must live with their children for more than half the year. (Kids away at school also qualify.) Yet ninety-six percent of parents who claim the EITC under the "live with" test, for example, also qualify for the dependent deduction under the support test. So Bush greatly exaggerates when he claims that using the live-with rule for all five kid's tax benefits will make tax filing far less onerous. And he undercuts even this modest gain by keeping the support test as an option for taxpayers who prefer it.

Bush's second "simplification" measure involves a tax subsidy for adoption. It's not a major item. Only 42,000 adopting parents claimed the tax break in 2000—although for the few who qualify, the tax savings can total as much as \$13,000. Bush would repeal the current rule that denies the tax breaks to people making more than \$192,000 a year.

Finally comes the biggest item that Bush touts as simplification: more tax-free investment accounts. The administration claims that this would make things simpler by consolidating the existing alphabet soup of savings tax breaks into fewer, more straightforward plans, specifically "lifetime savings accounts," "retirement savings accounts" and "individual development accounts." But that's preposterous. Instead, the new plans would generally be loaded on top of the existing ones. Indeed, rather than dropping such things as education savings accounts and medical savings accounts, Bush would actually expand them. Traditional tax-deductible IRAs would also be retained, al-

beit with diminished usage. So much for simplification.

What Bush really likes about his new investment accounts is that they would scrap the current income limits, sharply boost the maximum annual contributions and, in the case of lifetime savings accounts, have no rules about when the money could be withdrawn or what it could be used for. So the few people who could afford it could put upward of \$60,000 a year into tax-sheltered accounts. The administration hopes that eventually this will make almost all investment exempt from income taxes—and leave wage earners to pay almost all the taxes.

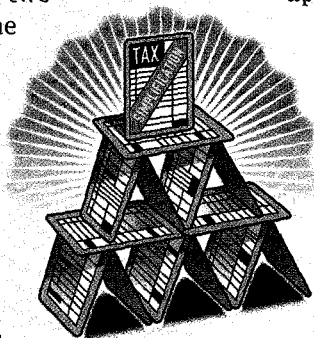
The way Bush structures his new savings plans is particularly disturbing. Now most savings tax breaks give a tax deduction when money is invested, but withdrawals are taxed. Under the administration's new lifetime and retirement savings account plans there would be no initial deduction, but all investment earnings would be permanently tax free.

An immediate deduction for contributions can be equivalent to an exemption for earnings—for any given person. If I'm in the 27 percent tax bracket and have \$1,000 to invest, it only costs me \$730 to make an investment that's tax deductible. If my \$1,000 grows to, say, \$10,000 by the time I withdraw it, I'll net \$7,300 (assuming my tax rate remains the same). Under the exemption-for-earnings approach, I don't get a deduction and so can invest only \$730, but at withdrawal, I still end up with \$7,300, tax free.

But among different people, the disparity between an initial deduction and an exemption for earnings can be huge. Suppose that one person is extremely lucky and his or her investment portfolio grows to \$1 million, while another person has very bad luck and ends up with nothing. Under the initial-deduction approach, the lucky person will ultimately—and rightfully—pay a lot more in taxes than the unlucky one. But if investment earnings are tax-free, both will pay the same zero tax.

Only someone contemptuous of tax equity could tolerate such an unfair result. Unfortunately, that sums up Bush. ■

ROBERT S. MCINTYRE is the director of Citizens for Tax Justice.





# Real Marriage, Real Life

BY E.J. GRAFF

Laughing at marriage, that age-old comedy staple, is trendy once again. *The Bachelor*, *The Bachelorette*, *Joe Millionaire* and the “reality” genre’s latest entry, *Married by America*: Watching what fools these mortals be is setting Nielsen records. And why

not? Unlike the terrifyingly high-stakes disputes over Iraq, smallpox vaccinations, airport security and secret detentions, marriage has an easy-to-follow story line—one we’re all sure we understand better than the players do.

But do these programs also reflect a new zeitgeist, a marrying mood? Are millions tuning in merely for distraction from the prospect of international thuggery? Or, given our scary times, are they ready to say goodbye to the commitment-free singles on *Seinfeld*, hoping to settle their own uncertain plotlines once and for all? If it’s the latter, they’ll be disappointed. Once upon a time, marriage could be life’s answer. Because of capitalism, that can never be true again.

What’s capitalism got to do with it? If you look closely, you’ll find two ideas about marriage running through these reality shows. The first: The only moral reason to marry is for love. While that’s the American philosophy of marriage today, it’s a recent idea historically. The second: Money influences your choice of mate. That thought, currently taboo, is actually quite traditional.

With that in mind, consider *Joe Millionaire*. Twenty women competed to win the affections of a man they thought had inherited \$50 million. But as the audience knew (and the women didn’t during filming), “Joe” was actually Evan Marriott, a construction worker earning \$19,000 a year, a fact he revealed only after choosing his prospective bride. Joe said he liked construction work better than college, and would rather be poor than unhappy. In good fairy-tale fashion, our simple hero selected—from the seething pool of aspiring actresses and catty sophisticates hoping never to work again—another simple peasant, er, impoverished substitute teacher doing what she loved. Viewer faith in true love was renewed. But finances are what triumphed: These two are a perfect socioeconomic match.

Or consider *Married by America*, now under way. After having mates chosen for them (first winnowed down by friends and families, final selections by viewer votes), five singles were “engaged” to five strangers on stage. Those couples who do marry after a month’s onscreen cohabitation will win a list of consumer prizes, including that American dream, the single-family house—the payoff for making love and war in front of the nation. Here’s my bet:

Those couples best matched socioeconomically are most likely to win the real estate.

Tying marriage to money may sound crass, but it’s more traditional than today’s desperation dating. Ketubah, dowry, bride-price, breach-of-contract suits: In most eras and cultures, finances have been negotiated up front. Arranged marriages, in which a person’s friends and family selected a prospect of equivalent socioeconomic “worth,” worked out just as well as (if not better than) Match.com.

Today we still find love based on compatible finances. You can see it in *The New York Times* wedding pages: Marriages are financial mergers, although today’s wealth comes in the form of a CV, a union card or a string of degrees. What is a college education fund but an updated dowry, an investment in a child’s financial future? And when was the last time you knew a corporate lawyer to marry a postal worker or (except in a J. Lo movie) a maid to wed a future U.S. senator?

Here’s what’s historically new: Few couples today are yoked together in daily labor. Traditionally, husbands and wives were business partners; one brought in the fish, the other hawked them at the market. Working and sleeping together gave them a good shot at love—and a reason to stay together when love wasn’t there.

But capitalism turned us into workers as mobile as cellular phones, able to make a living one by one. There’s no FDIC guarantee on today’s marital investment; we don’t have to stay together to stay alive—even if, in these parlous times, it can seem as if we do.

After the international traumas of the 1930s and ’40s, shell-shocked young people raced down the aisle—and then, 20 years later, raced back out again. So far, almost no reality-show pair has made it more than a few minutes after the program’s end. That’s what makes it comedy. Don’t you wish the mistakes in our international reality show could be so easily undone? ■

E.J. GRAFF, a visiting scholar at the Brandeis University Women’s Studies Research Center, is a contributing editor to *The Prospect* and the author of *What Is Marriage For? The Strange Social History of Our Most Intimate Institution*.



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# Just the Beginning

Is Iraq the opening salvo in a war to remake the world?

BY ROBERT DREYFUSS

ILLUSTRATION BY ANITA KUNZ

For months Americans have been told that the United States is going to war against Iraq in order to disarm Saddam Hussein, remove him from power, eliminate Iraq's alleged stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, and prevent Baghdad from blackmailing its

neighbors or aiding terrorist groups. But the Bush administration's hawks, especially the neoconservatives who provide the driving force for war, see the conflict with Iraq as much more than that. It is a signal event, designed to create cataclysmic shock waves throughout the region and around the world, ushering in a new era of American imperial power. It is also likely to bring the United States into conflict with several states in the Middle East. Those who think that U.S. armed forces can complete a tidy war in Iraq, without the battle spreading beyond Iraq's borders, are likely to be mistaken.

"I think we're going to be obliged to fight a regional war, whether we want to or not," says Michael Ledeen, a former U.S. national-security official and a key strategist among the ascendant flock of neoconservative hawks, many of whom have taken up perches inside the U.S. government. Asserting that the war against Iraq can't be contained, Ledeen says that the very logic of the global war on terrorism will drive the United States to confront an expanding network of enemies in the region. "As soon as we land in Iraq, we're going to face the whole terrorist network," he says, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and a collection of militant splinter groups backed by nations—Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia—that he calls "the terror masters."

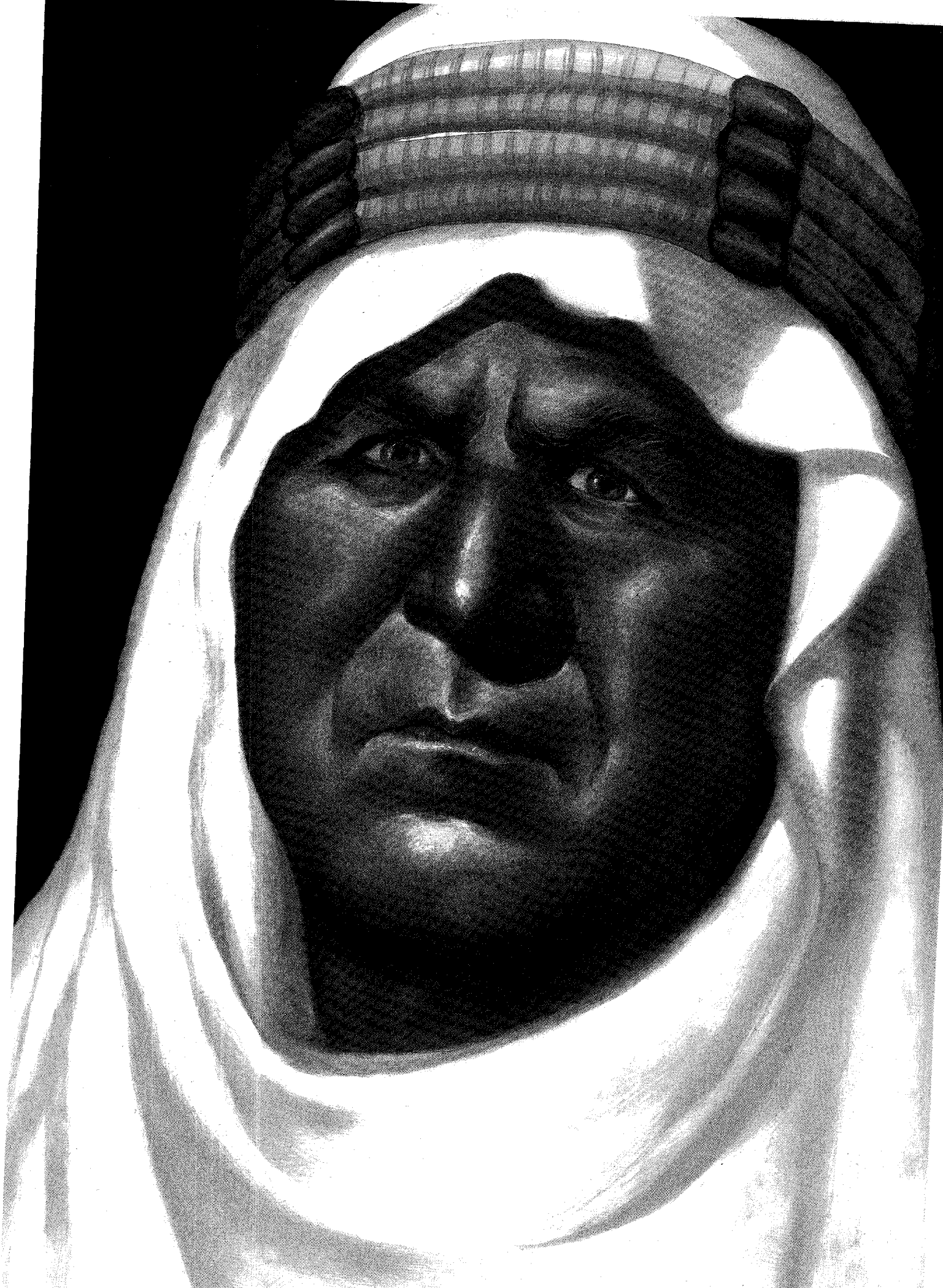
"It may turn out to be a war to remake the world," says Ledeen.

In the Middle East, impending "regime change" in Iraq is just the first step in a wholesale reordering of the entire region, according to neoconservatives—who've begun almost gleefully referring to themselves as a "cabal." Like dominoes,

the regimes in the region—first Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia, then Lebanon and the PLO, and finally Sudan, Libya, Yemen and Somalia—are slated to capitulate, collapse or face U.S. military action. To those states, says cabal ringleader Richard Perle, a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and chairman of the Defense Policy Board, an influential Pentagon advisory committee, "We could deliver a short message, a two-word message: 'You're next.'" In the aftermath, several of those states, including Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia, may end up as dismantled, unstable shards in the form of mini-states that resemble Yugoslavia's piecemeal wreckage. And despite the Wilsonian rhetoric from the president and his advisers about bringing democracy to the Middle East, at bottom it's clear that their version of democracy might have to be imposed by force of arms.

And not just in the Middle East. Three-thousand U.S. soldiers are slated to arrive in the Philippines, opening yet another new front in the war on terrorism, and North Korea is finally in the administration's sights. On the horizon could be Latin America, where the Bush administration endorsed a failed regime change in Venezuela last year, and where new left-leaning challenges are emerging in Brazil, Ecuador and elsewhere. Like the bombing of Hiroshima, which stunned the Japanese into surrender in 1945 and served notice to the rest of the world that the United States possessed unparalleled power it would not hesitate to use, the war against Iraq has a similar purpose. "It's like the bully in a playground," says Ian Lustick, a University of Pennsylvania professor of political science and author of *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands*. "You beat up somebody, and everybody else behaves."







Over and over again, in speeches, articles and white papers, the neoconservatives have made it plain that the war against Iraq is intended to demonstrate Washington's resolve to implement President Bush's new national-security strategy, announced last fall—even if doing so means overthrowing the entire post-World War II structure of treaties and alliances, including NATO and the United Nations. In their book, *The War Over Iraq*, William Kristol of *The Weekly Standard* and Lawrence F. Kaplan of *The New Republic* write, "The mission begins in Baghdad, but it does not end there. ... We stand at the cusp of a new historical era. ... This is a decisive moment. ... It is so clearly about more than Iraq. It is about more even than the future of the Middle East and the war on terror. It is about what sort of role the United States intends to play in the twenty-first century."

INVADING IRAQ, OCCUPYING ITS CAPITAL AND ITS OIL fields, and seizing control of its Shia Islamic holy places can only have a devastating and highly destabilizing impact on the entire region, from Egypt to central Asia and Pakistan. "We are all targeted," Syrian President Bashar Assad told an Arab summit meeting, called to discuss Iraq, on March 1. "We are all in danger."

"They want to foment revolution in Iran and use that to isolate and possibly attack Syria in [Lebanon's] Bekaa Valley, and force Syria out," says former Assistant Secretary of State

late former shah of Iran's royal family could be rallied to the cause. "Nostalgia for the last shah's son, Reza Pahlavi ... has again risen," says Reuel Marc Gerecht, a former CIA officer who, like Ledeen and Perle, is ensconced at the AEI. "We must be prepared, however, to take the battle more directly to the mullahs," says Gerecht, adding that the United States must consider strikes at both Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps and allies in Lebanon. "In fact, we have only two meaningful options: Confront clerical Iran and its proxies militarily or ring it with an oil embargo."

Iran is not the only country where restoration of monarchy is being considered. Neoconservative strategists have also supported returning to power the Iraqi monarchy, which was toppled in 1958 by a combination of military officers and Iraqi communists. When the Ottoman Empire crumbled after World War I, British intelligence sponsored the rise of a little-known family called the Hashemites, whose origins lay in the Saudi region around Mecca and Medina. Two Hashemite brothers were installed on the thrones of Jordan and Iraq.

For nearly a year, the neocons have suggested that Jordan's Prince Hassan, the brother of the late King Hussein of Jordan and a blood relative of the Iraqi Hashemite family, might re-establish the Hashemites in Baghdad were Saddam Hussein to be removed. Among the neocons are Michael Rubin, a former AEI fellow, and David Wurmser, a Perle acolyte. Rubin in 2002 wrote an article for London's

## Invading Iraq, occupying its capital and its oil fields, and seizing control of its Shia Islamic holy places can only have a devastating impact on the entire region.

for Near East Affairs Edward S. Walker, now president of the Middle East Institute. "They want to pressure [Muammar] Qaddafi in Libya and they want to destabilize Saudi Arabia, because they believe instability there is better than continuing with the current situation. And out of this, they think, comes Pax Americana."

The more immediate impact of war against Iraq will occur in Iran, say many analysts, including both neoconservative and more impartial experts on the Middle East. As the next station along the "axis of evil," Iran holds power that's felt far and wide in the region. Oil-rich and occupying a large tract of geopolitical real estate, Iran is arguably the most strategically important country in its neighborhood. With its large Kurdish population, Iran has a stake in the future of Iraqi Kurdistan. As a Shia power, Iran has vast influence among the Shia majority in Iraq, Lebanon and Bahrain, with the large Shia population in Saudi Arabia's oil-rich eastern province and among the warlords of western Afghanistan. And Iran's ties to the violent Hezbollah guerrillas, whose anti-American zeal can only be inflamed by the occupation of Iraq, will give the Bush administration all the reason it needs to expand the war on terrorism to Tehran.

The first step, neoconservatives say, will be for the United States to lend its support to opposition groups of Iranian exiles willing to enlist in the war on terrorism, much as the Iraqi National Congress served as the spearhead for American intervention in Iraq. And, just as the doddering ex-king of Afghanistan served as a rallying point for America's conquest of that landlocked, central Asian nation, the remnants of the

*Daily Telegraph* headlined, "If Iraqis want a king, Hassan of Jordan could be their man." Wurmser in 1999 wrote *Tyranny's Ally*, an AEI-published book devoted largely to the idea of restoring the Hashemite dynasty in Iraq. Today Rubin is a key Department of Defense official overseeing U.S. policy toward Iraq, and Wurmser is a high-ranking official working for Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton, himself a leading neoconservative ideologue.

But if the neocons are toying with the idea of restoring monarchies in Iraq and Iran, they are also eyeing the destruction of the region's wealthiest and most important royal family of all: the Saudis. Since September 11, the hawks have launched an all-out verbal assault on the Saudi monarchy, accusing Riyadh of supporting Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda organization and charging that the Saudis are masterminding a worldwide network of mosques, schools and charity organizations that promote terrorism. It's a charge so breathtaking that those most familiar with Saudi Arabia are at a loss for words when asked about it. "The idea that the House of Saud is cooperating with al-Qaeda is absurd," says James Akins, who served as U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia in the mid-1970s and frequently travels to the Saudi capital as a consultant. "It's too dumb to be talked about."

That doesn't stop the neoconservatives from doing so, however. In *The War Against the Terror Masters*, Ledeen cites Wurmser in charging that, just before 9-11, "Saudi intelligence had become difficult to distinguish from Al Qaeda." Countless other, similar accusations have been flung

at the Saudis by neocons. Max Singer, co-founder of the Hudson Institute, has repeatedly suggested that the United States seek to dismantle the Saudi kingdom by encouraging breakaway republics in the oil-rich eastern province (which is heavily Shia) and in the western Hijaz. "After [Hussein] is removed, there will be an earthquake throughout the region," says Singer. "If this means the fall of the [Saudi] regime, so be it." And when Hussein goes, Ledeer says, it could lead to the collapse of the Saudi regime, perhaps to pro-al-Qaeda radicals. "In that event, we would have to extend the war to the Arabian peninsula, at the very least to the oil-producing regions."

"I've stopped saying that Saudi Arabia will be taken over by Osama bin Laden or by a bin Laden clone if we go into Iraq," says Akins. "I'm now convinced that's exactly what [the neoconservatives] want. And then we take it over."

Iraq, too, could shatter into at least three pieces, which would be based on the three erstwhile Ottoman Empire provinces of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra that were cobbled together to compose the state eight decades ago. That could conceivably leave a Hashemite kingdom in control of largely Sunni central Iraq, a Shia state in the south (possibly linked to Iran, informally) and some sort of Kurdish entity in the north—either independent or, as is more likely, under the control of the Turkish army. Turkey, a reluctant player in George W. Bush's crusade, fears an independent Kurdistan and would love to get its hands on Iraq's northern oil fields around the city of Kirkuk.

The final key component for these map-redrawing, would-be Lawrences of Arabia is the toppling of Assad's regime and the breakup of Syria. Perle himself proposed exactly that in a 1996 document prepared for the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies (IASPS), an Israeli think tank. The plan, titled, "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," was originally prepared as a working paper to advise then-Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. It called on Israel to work with Turkey and Jordan to "contain, destabilize and roll-back" various states in the region, overthrow Saddam Hussein in Iraq, press Jordan to restore a scion of its Hashemite dynasty to the Iraqi throne and, above all, launch military assaults against Lebanon and Syria as a "prelude to a redrawing of the map of the Middle East [to] threaten Syria's territorial integrity." Joining Perle in writing the IASPS paper were Douglas Feith and Wurmser, now senior officials in Bush's national-security apparatus.

GARY SCHMITT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE PROJECT for a New American Century (PNAC), worries only that the Bush administration, including Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney, might not have the guts to see its plan all the way through once Hussein is toppled. "It's going to be no small thing for the United States to follow through on its stated strategic policy in the region," he says. But Schmitt believes that President Bush is fully

committed, having been deeply affected by the events of September 11. Schmitt roundly endorses the vision put forward by Kaplan and Kristol in *The War Over Iraq*, which was sponsored by the PNAC. "It's really our book," says Schmitt.

Six years ago, in its founding statement of principles, PNAC called for a radical change in U.S. foreign and defense policy, with a beefed-up military budget and a more muscular stance abroad, challenging hostile regimes and assuming "American global leadership." Signers of that statement included Cheney; Rumsfeld; Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz; Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Peter W. Rodman; Elliott Abrams, the Near East and North African affairs director at the National Security Council; Zalmay Khalilzad, the White House liaison to the Iraqi opposition; I. Lewis Libby, Cheney's chief of staff; and Gov. Jeb Bush (R-Fla.), the president's brother. The PNAC statement foreshadowed the outline of the president's 2002 national-security strategy.



Watch your back: Syrian President Bashar Assad (left) and Iraqi al-Majid, a cousin of Saddam Hussein

Scenarios for sweeping changes in the Middle East, imposed by U.S. armed forces, were once thought fanciful—even ridiculous—but they are now taken seriously given the incalculable impact of an invasion of Iraq. Chas Freeman, who served as U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War, worries about everything that could go wrong. "It's a war to turn the kaleidoscope, by people who know nothing about the Middle East," he says. "And there's no way to know how the pieces will fall." Perle and Co., says Freeman, are seeking a Middle East dominated by an alliance between the United States and Israel, backed by overwhelming military force. "It's *machtpolitik*, might makes right," he says. Asked about the comparison between Iraq and Hiroshima, Freeman adds, "There is no question that the Richard Perles of the world see shock and awe as a means to establish a position of supremacy that others fear to challenge."

But Freeman, who is now president of the Middle East Policy Council, thinks it will be a disaster. "This outdoes anything in the march of folly catalog," he says. "It's the lemmings going over the cliff." ■

ROBERT DREYFUSS is a Prospect senior correspondent.



# Clash of Civilizations

In the battle between America and Europe, we better hope that they prevail.

BY HAROLD MEYERSON

## I. BUSH V. WORLD

George W. Bush may believe he has the mandate of heaven for what, as I write, is still the looming war in Iraq, but he's not doing very well on earth. Indeed, he's all but unified the planet in opposition to the notion of a U.S.-led preemptive war.

Governments that support the war do so at their own risk. In Britain, Prime Minister Tony Blair is in danger of losing the support of his own party. In Spain, the Popular Party of Prime Minister José María Aznar has fallen behind the opposition Socialists for the first time in seven years. In Eastern Europe—a particularly pro-American part of the world where most governments back the U.S. position on Iraq—huge majorities nonetheless reject the war: 75 percent of Poles, 82 percent of Hungarians, 76 percent of Czechs.

These numbers directly reflect the failure of the administration to convince the world that Iraq poses the kind of imminent threat that justifies a preventive war. But plainly they also reflect a more fundamental rift than that, as the answers to an international Gallup Poll taken in January make clear. When respondents were asked whether American foreign policy had a positive or negative effect on their countries, what was stunning was the uniformity of their answers: In Spain, the margin was 57 percent negative to 9 percent positive; in Russia, the margin was 55 percent to 11 percent; in Argentina, 58 percent to 13 percent; in Pakistan, 46 percent to 8 percent.

This global rejection is breathtaking, but not all that surprising. Under Bush, America has become a hegemon with a chip on its shoulder, at once belligerent and xenophobic. The United States has been seceding from a new world order of interdependence that, until recently, it had helped construct. At the very moment when the world's peoples have recognized the need to build global institutions to deal with a global economy and environment, with globalized crime and weapons proliferation and stateless terrorism, the United States has arrogated to itself the right to ignore and undermine those parts of the emerging global architecture that fail to please its eye. In Bush's Washington, the World Trade Organization (WTO) is good so long as U.S. investors don't have profits diminished by onerous labor and environmental standards; the Kyoto Protocol on global warming posed such a threat and was rejected; the International Criminal Court was fine for deterring other nations' war crimes but not our own; the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty threatened a new Pentagon program and had to be scrapped. The United Nations—well, we'll just have to see about that.

And then there's the European Union, which is well on its way to becoming a supranational entity—more than a federation but not quite a state—that would be something new in the world. At first glance this convergence of America's long-time allies might not seem threatening to the United States. But of all the entities aborning at the dawn of the 21st century, a unified Europe poses the greatest threat to the unholy alliance of neoconservatives and xenophobes who dominate the Bush administration. For them the 21st century has already been stamped as American property. The one obstacle in their path is Europe—an emerging power bloc committed to a different kind of capitalism than ours and the primary champion of the very global institutions that impede the construction of an American-dominated order.

On the whole this is an assessment with which Europe—masses and elites alike—concurs. As Michael Emerson of the Centre for European Policy Studies has written, "Europe understands that the future governance of this world has to be some system of cosmopolitan democracy." And, he might have added, Europeans understand that such a system will never win the blessing of the Bush White House. (Indeed, it's hard to say which of those notions troubles the administration more—a democratic world order or a cosmopolitan one.)

And so, at the outset of the 21st century, the battle between Europe and America for the power to shape the century, and on behalf of different models of social organization, is already joined. And may I gently suggest that the best possible outcome for the American democratic republic—for the America of Jefferson, Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt—would be an American (or more precisely, Bushian) defeat. But not an unconditional one.

## II. EUROPE V. AMERICA

I doubt that many, if any, European leaders at the time the Berlin Wall fell envisioned this clash. Though many took umbrage when Francis Fukuyama proclaimed history's end, the idea that Europe would be so fundamentally opposed to the United States within a scant 14 years would have taken them by surprise. The European left, after all, had long since acclimated itself to capitalism; the socialists, social democrats and British Laborites were all heirs of Eduard Bernstein, the fin de siècle meliorative socialist for whom the very idea of a final conflict was anathema.

In his new book *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, which Stephen Holmes reviews elsewhere in this issue [see "Why We Need Europe,"

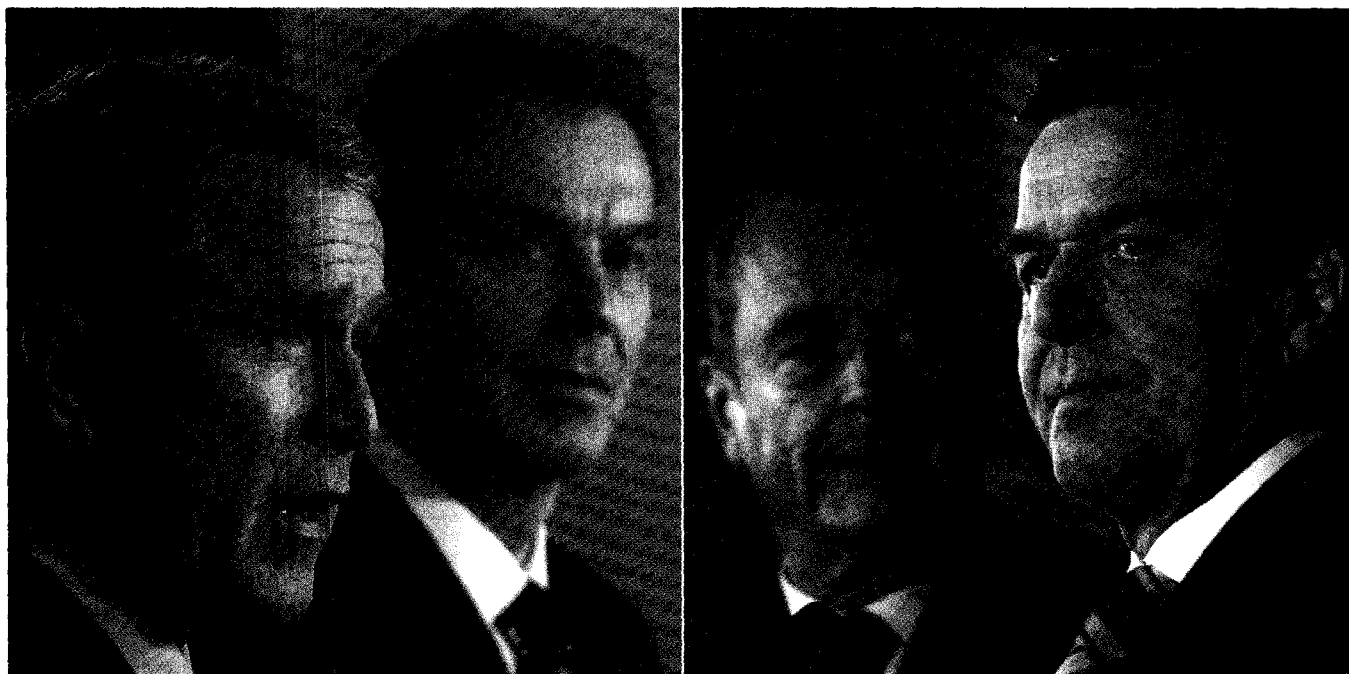
page 47], Robert Kagan adduces some of the reasons for the rift that has opened up within the erstwhile Atlantic alliance. Kagan depicts a Europe enmeshed in unification (and the worlds of diplomacy and social harmonization that attend such a project) and an America that has chosen instead to be the lone sentinel guarding against external threats and disorder. He omits, however, any discussion of the diverging economic visions and realities that increasingly separate the two great continental democracies. He especially omits any thought that the European model might be the more compelling.

When the Western alliance formed at the conclusion of World War II, it was unified by more than a common commitment to democracy and opposition to Soviet communism.

worse, the economic lives of Europeans remained stable while Americans found themselves in an increasingly dynamic and Darwinian economy.

European egalitarianism existed between nations as well as within them. In the course of building a unified Europe, the wealthier nations of northern Europe transferred resources to their poorer cousins in the south: If they were to be in an open market with Portugal and Greece, the pay scales and educational standards of such nations would have to rise. Likewise, the nations of northern Europe were the world's most generous when it came to providing aid to developing nations on other continents.

For its part, the United States never evinced much interest in the upward harmonization of other nations, and the



Attackers and containers: George W. Bush and Tony Blair (left), Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder (right)

Until roughly the early 1980s and the advent of Ronald Reagan, both Europe and America shared a commitment to a mixed economy in which unions, government regulations, a growing public sector and Keynesian economics all mitigated laissez-faire capitalism's tendencies toward inequality and cycles of boom-and-bust. The U.S. economy was never nearly as mixed as the European one—its unions were less powerful, its public sector smaller, its health insurance spotty, its family policy nonexistent—but from FDR through Richard Nixon, the public sphere would, in fits and starts, expand.

Then the two economies began to diverge. While the welfare state continued to grow in Europe, its already smaller American version grew smaller still. Under constant attack from business, U.S. unions went into steep decline, and the balance of power within the Democratic Party shifted sharply toward business and, more particularly, finance. Decent-paying blue-collar jobs vanished by the millions in the states, and inequality grew steeply here while continuing to decline in Europe. American firms elevated shareholder value above all other indices of success (including long-term profitability), European firms put more funding into research and development and capital investment, and the productivity rates of northern European nations surpassed ours. For better and

policies of the U.S.-dominated International Monetary Fund (IMF) tended only to worsen recessions in the less developed world. And in the National Security Strategy that the Bush administration unveiled last summer, the United States created a new foreign-aid program intended to remake the world more to its liking. Alongside its traditional foreign-aid program, the White House announced a grant program in which money would flow to those nations that embraced the administration's economics (free markets, low marginal tax rates, not much regulation).

If the United States is a force for global laissez-faire, however, it would be a gross overstatement to say that Europe is a force for global social democracy. Such figures as Willy Brandt and Olof Palme, who provided crucial assistance for the African National Congress and who quietly initiated the steps that led to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, are gone from the scene, and of today's generation of Euro leaders, only a few—most notably German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer—show much concern for the world beyond Europe. The United States may dominate the IMF but it's hard to find a European finance ministry that has taken issue with the fund's draconian remedies for financially troubled developing nations.



Kagan argues that Europe is too inwardly focused to pay heed to crises in distant lands that may require a resolution involving armed force, and that advocating force abroad while renouncing it at home seems beyond Europe's inclinations—or capacities. But Europe's inwardness has also led it to champion workers' rights at home while effectively dismissing them abroad. Perhaps because European workers have been so much better protected than their American counterparts from the shocks of the world market, it is—at the level of national leadership at least—American liberals more than Europeans who have stood up for labor and environmental standards in the developing world. European governments have never insisted that workers' rights be made a priority of the WTO, and it was in the United States, not Europe, that opposition emerged to China's unconditional entry to the WTO. The idea of a variable international minimum wage is even now being advanced not by a Scandinavian socialist but by a Missourian Democrat (Dick Gephardt).

The European challenge to the American version of globalism, then, is a sometime thing. If Europe does not provide much resistance to the rule of American *laissez-faire* in global economics, however, it does provide in itself a model for a more humane form of capitalism. And when other nations go comparison shopping between the European and American models, Europe tends to do pretty well. When the iron curtain crumbled, the newly post-communist nations of Eastern

Morton H. Halperin in these pages last year [see "Deter and Contain," *TAP*, Nov. 4, 2002]: an aggressive inspection regime, in control of all the skies over Iraq and with a mandate to destroy from the air all buildings from which inspectors are denied entry by Hussein's government.

But both these kinds of interventions (Bosnia and Iraq), as well as more conventional conflicts, would require of Europe some things it does not have: a rapid reaction force and a will to use it. In the late 1990s, Tony Blair and French President Jacques Chirac called for establishing such a force, but Europe's attention has been directed inward, and no such force as yet exists. What's more telling is that the United States, for all its claims that it would like more allies, is dead set against such a force. Indeed, as the Cato Institute's Christopher Layne has noted, the United States is arguing that each European nation should develop some niche military capability rather than have Europe develop an autonomous force. By the same token, the United States encouraged the European Union to expand eastward in hopes that the new nations would bring perspectives widely variant from those of the western states. It has also voiced concerns that in the preliminary plans for a European Constitution, individual nations will not be able to veto a foreign policy agreed upon by a majority vote. The White House's ability to pick off a Blair here, a Berlusconi there, would be totally undermined.

## **For President Bush and his ideologues, the 21st century has already been stamped as the American century. The one obstacle in their path is Europe.**

Europe adopted Europe's electoral and health systems rather than America's money-dominated ones. All well and good for those revolted by a society organized around the principle of one dollar—one vote. But if workers outside Europe are to experience the global economy as something other than a race to the bottom, Europe must do more to apply its principles beyond its borders.

### **III. EU AND WHOSE ARMY?**

On matters of military force, Europe needs to realize that it actually has conflicting principles. In late January, I met in Brussels with some leading members of the European Parliament, who explained why the notion of preemptive war was particularly repugnant to them. (As if anyone representing a continent that had experienced the preemptive wars of 1914 and 1939 needed to explain that.) "All our experience leads us to say, 'Never again' to war and holocaust," one legislator said. But holocausts are seldom averted absent the use of force, and Europe's inability to block the massacres of Bosnia and the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo reveal the shortcomings of its nonmilitary preferences when faced with a challenge to its own moral imperatives.

The policy of saying "no" to America's unilateral use of preemptive force may be morally satisfying and strategically sound. But it has failed to deter the United States or to weaken Saddam Hussein's resistance to inspections, which has eroded only under threat of imminent war. The alternative to this war is inspection and containment, in the manner laid out by former Clinton State Department official

In short, the United States has been conducting a preemptive war against a unified Europe for some time now.

And yet the Bush and neocon model of an America First century is either undesirable or unsustainable—or both. Even if we accept the wholly implausible thesis that a U.S. overthrow of Hussein and subsequent occupation and reconstruction of Iraq would democratize the Middle East, for instance, the willingness of the American people to support such a project would run counter to the vision of a privatized America that the conservatives commend here at home. The generation of Americans who supported the Marshall Plan had themselves benefited from an activist government; they were accustomed to a government that undertook major public works and that put millions of Americans on public payrolls. Today, state and local governments are slashing basic services while the Bush administration is throwing money at the rich. Why, under these conditions, conservatives expect Americans to pay for the reconstruction of Iraq is anyone's guess. The kind of solidaristic values and confidence in the public sphere needed to support such an ambitious, enlightened project can be found today, ironically, only in Europe.

Americans must hope that, in this era of global integration, we are *not* at the brink of the American century. If anything, the Europeans should take some time out from perfecting Europe to project their values more forcefully on the wider world. We need Europe to save us from ourselves. ■

HAROLD MEYERSON *is the Prospect's editor-at-large.*



# Beyond Left and Right

**A GUIDE FOR THE UNWARY**

**BY ROBERT KUTTNER**

I recently attended a forum, sponsored by one centrist and two liberal groups, on opportunities to bridge ideological extremes. The panelists were discussing a new report titled “Crossing Divides.” The report addressed recent policy innovations that promise to break through stale polarities and yield real benefits for the poor, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit.

The forum’s moderator, a journalist, began by congratulating the hosts and observing that politics is discredited today because voters are sick of partisan bickering. But hold on. Is the main evil of American public life today “partisan bickering”? Or is it conservative ideology uncompromisingly wrecking public institutions? Could we imagine, say, the American Enterprise Institute or the Heritage Foundation sponsoring a similar event



promoting an ethic that conservatives need to put aside partisanship and meet liberals halfway? At every such conservative event I have attended, the ethic is that the last vestige of liberalism needs to be crushed. Often a token liberal will be invited, either as a foil or a dupe, but there is no careless talk of splitting differences or transcending ideology.

The desire to take the politics out of politics is as old as the American Republic. "Party" was a term of disrepute among the founders, and George Washington famously disparaged factionalism. In reality, however, the U.S. Constitution was a fiercely debated invention. Disputes about high principles were entangled with arguments rooted in self-interests of region and class. Explicit Federalist and anti-Federalist factions were already well defined when the Constitutional Convention began in 1787. Yet the image of society's wisest disinterestedly pursuing a true public interest has loomed large in our national mythology ever since.

The dream of a politics beyond politics enjoyed a second vogue during the Progressive Era, when patrician reformers recoiled from both the abuses of the robber barons and the reaction of a raucous populism. The progressives saw themselves as a force for public good and against class war; they hoped to extend science to the study of society and lend disinterested expertise to public policy. However, in both the era of the founding and the age of reform, these seekers of the common good were hardly value-free; they explicitly pursued stronger public institutions.

We are witnessing another upsurge of post-political high purpose again today, and, oddly, it is being promoted mainly by moderate liberals. I say oddly because conservatives are in a state of ideological ferocity directed against public institutions. Yet instead of producing an equal and opposite fervor among liberals, the right's take-no-prisoners mentality seems to be engendering a veritable epidemic of niceness and conciliation. One thinks of Robert Frost's famous definition of a liberal as someone so broad-minded that he won't take his own side in an argument.

It would be one thing if militant conservatism were truly producing, in the phrase of one recent emblematic book, a coherent, strategic and politically compelling "radical center." Something of the sort occurred in Britain in the 1990s. The Tories had veered so far right that Tony Blair's New Labour was able to define a modernizing political center led by the moderate left. The United States today has no such political force. With the right ascendant, America's would-be radical center is intellectually muddled and politically wishful—a force for high-minded appeasement. Indeed, the only effective radical center in America today is the radical right masquerading as the center.

CONSIDER THE NEW AMERICA FOUNDATION. IF ANY RECENTLY founded institution epitomizes the fantasy of a public good that lies somewhere "beyond left and right," it is this one. Created in 1999 by Ted Halstead, co-author of the 2001 manifesto *The Radical Center*, the foundation raises serious money to promote ideas that Halstead sometimes characterizes as articulating a new politics for a new generation. It subsidizes more than two dozen journalists as fellows of the foundation to explore such ideas and place them in highly visible venues. Halstead gets exceptionally kind treatment from a Washington press inclined to accept the assumption that

what ails the republic is outmoded partisan bickering. Halstead's fellows, essentially well-subsidized freelancers, show up in one influential newspaper and magazine after another—including *The American Prospect*.

The key political premise of Halstead's *Radical Center*, co-authored with Michael Lind, is that innovative policies that would energize the electorate are blocked because both political parties "have been captured by their own extremes and special interests ... ." The claim is astonishing. The Republicans, surely, have been captured by their extremes. But the Democrats? The last two Democratic presidents have been moderates; the whole evolution of the Democratic Party has been away from New Deal or McGovern-style politics and toward the Democratic Leadership Council's (DLC) model. What's more, the Democrats, given the illegitimate circumstances of the 2000 election, have been remarkably timid about confronting President Bush.

Nonetheless, this premise finds an enthusiastic audience among opinion-makers. Halstead scored his biggest publicity coup when *The Atlantic Monthly* turned over much of its January-February 2003 issue to a New America Foundation-sponsored, 48-page special section titled "The Real State of the Union." The foundation enjoys a useful interlock in the person of its board chairman, James Fallows, *The Atlantic's* long-standing national correspondent. The special section is essentially an extended infomercial for the foundation and its ideology of a radical center. Most of the pieces are extrapolations of policy ideas in the Halstead-Lind book. *The Atlantic*, remarkably, has committed to making this partnership an annual feature.

The New America segment begins with a short introductory essay by Fallows that muses on the ritual of the president's annual State of the Union address and laments the condition of both political parties. Though Fallows is a liberal, nothing in his essay suggests that he considers radical conservatism the more serious menace. The supplement closes with Halstead's own piece contrasting the two faces of America (richest, most powerful nation; highest rates of poverty, etc.). He calls for a new 21st-century social contract, which would trade greater individual flexibility (multiple careers, lifetime retraining) for greater security (new, portable entitlements).

In between these bookend essays, at least 10 of the 13 other articles offer diagnoses of social ills and policy proposals that are, by any reasonable definition, liberal. For instance, foundation fellow and co-author Lind notes the depopulation of the rural heartland, the housing shortage in the big cities and the portability of the wired economy. Eureka! "Imagine a federal program," he writes, "that would help poor and working-class Americans to move not from crowded cities to suburbs in the same general area but from crowded states to low-density states where homes are cheaper and the general cost of living is lower." Lind also wants policy incentives to channel economic activity to these depopulated areas.

Good idea. But Lind doesn't deign to address the political obstacles. The very phrase, "Imagine a federal program ..." is a nonstarter in the current Bush era, let alone a program of national economic planning. (If you want to imagine something, imagine the Republican catcalls at the presumption of large-scale social engineering.)

Ray Boshara, another foundation fellow, decries the widening inequality of wealth and plugs an approach—"stakeholder

accounts”—that the *Prospect* has also found attractive. In Boshara's rendition, every American baby would receive \$6,000 at birth. This is also a worthy idea, one as old as Jefferson's land-tenure policies that favored freeholders and Lincoln's 1862 Homestead Act, and as new as Al Gore's plan for tax-subsidized Universal Savings Accounts. Boshara calculates that this new federal program would cost “only about \$24 billion a year.” Why is this worthy idea off the radar screen? Could it have something to do with George W. Bush's \$3 trillion in tax giveaways (mostly to the already wealthy) and the attendant squeeze on social outlay generally (let alone on proposed new entitlements)? Boshara doesn't say.

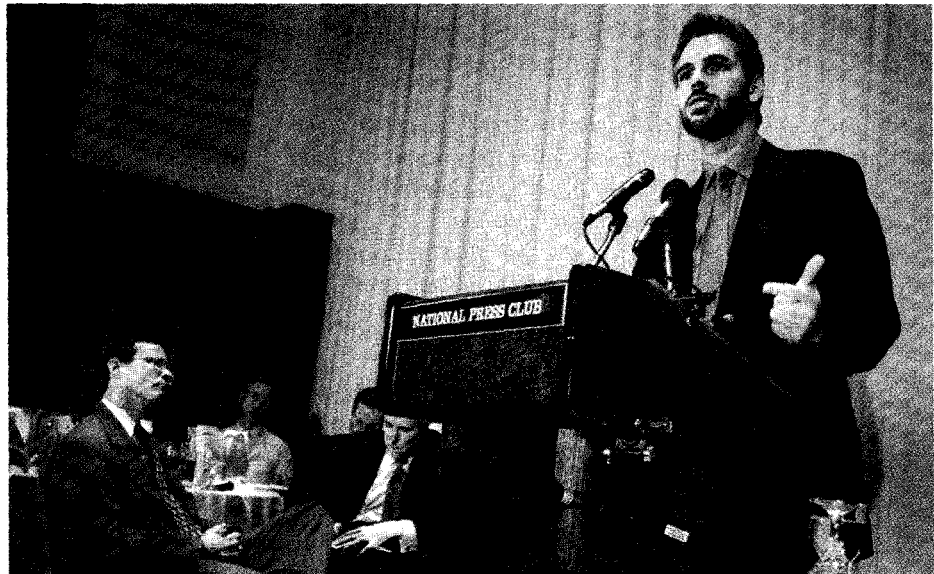
On and on the special report goes: There's an intelligent and liberal call to rebuild the criminal-justice system of parole and early release (John Ashcroft is not mentioned), and a piece deploring the loss of U.S. manufacturing jobs and urging “an effective industrial policy” (more conservative catcalls). Another well-intentioned article calls for a new, redistributive federal program to subsidize portable 401(k)-style retirement accounts for all. (“Creating a universal and portable system of accounts would not be hard.”) Sure, it would be easy—if you had the votes. This piece includes no allusion to the Enron scandal or the gutting of the Securities and Exchange Commission and related regulatory issues, no mention of the politics of pension reform and Social Security, and just one breezy aside on how to pay for it. (Repeal Bush's tax cut! As if this were a minor detail rather than a massive ideological battle.)

Yet another smart article, this one by foundation fellow Karen Kornbluh, points to the stresses on working parents and calls for “a sensible modern family policy” built around three remedies: paid parental leave, high-quality child care, and a severance of the connection between family benefits and employment—in other words, new social entitlements long championed by liberals. In the spirit of the rest of the supplement, there is no mention of the real political obstacle—the Republican scorn for social investment. Instead, there is the characteristic, politely evenhanded apportionment of blame: “For the past few decades both Republicans and Democrats have tried to lay claim to the ‘pro-family’ mantle. Neither party, however, has offered a coherent plan ...”

There are several more such pieces, but you get the idea. Amid all these liberal policy particulars, the closest thing to a forthright liberal ideological statement or political analysis is the essay by our former colleague and frequent *Prospect* contributor, Jed Purdy, which calls for greater trust in one another and in government. “We know that in the 1990s, without faith in government, faith in business turned out to be groundless,” Purdy concludes. Amen, brother.

One questions the judgment of *The Atlantic Monthly* with some trepidation. There is much to admire here, including some fine social critiques that don't really address policy as such. My quarrel is not with the writers. Many, including

Fallows and Scott Stossel, have graced our pages. The New America Foundation surely deserves praise for having created a habitat for first-rate policy journalists. But in the foundation's framing of issues, there is a stunning innocence, naive or disingenuous, of politics. Nowhere in the articles is a trenchant discussion of why any of these proposals would be dead on arrival in George W. Bush's Washington. All presume that government, the necessary instrument of public policy, retains its normal capacity to tax, spend or regulate. But of course all three instruments are forbidden today because of ultraconservative hegemony. What planet are these people living on? It is almost as if a censor went through *The Atlantic* package, article by article, and systematically redacted any analysis that smacked of politics, let alone partisan politics.



The center does not hold: the New America Foundation's Ted Halstead

WHAT ACCOUNTS FOR THE APPEAL OF THIS POST-IDEOLOGICAL sensibility to liberal reformers at a time when even moderate liberalism is being crushed? As noted, in some respects the conceit is as old as the republic. Also, *The Atlantic*, as the premier general monthly journal of culture and politics, doesn't like to think of itself as having a political view. It tacks both moderate left (Fallows, Stossel, Jack Beatty) and truculent right (Michael Kelly, David Brooks, Robert Kaplan), as well as literary and non-ideological (William Langewiesche). There is also the vain liberal hope, reminiscent of the Clinton era, that if you meet a bully halfway, maybe he will reciprocate.

A somewhat less elevated explanation is the politics of funding and marketing. Ted Halstead's brand of policy entrepreneurship has multiple appeals. It attracts financial support from high-tech executives who tend to combine a social liberalism (clean environment, reproductive choice, gay rights, political reform) with an economic individualism (low taxes, heroic entrepreneurship, techno fixes). And big mainstream foundations, whose program executives are often more liberal than their business-dominated boards, find it soothing to embrace the premise of policy solutions beyond left and right. Some liberal foundations have even been convinced that Halstead's ostensibly post-ideological stance actually conceals a muscular progressivism. If so, as Winston Churchill remarked when Lady Churchill termed his 1945 election defeat a blessing in disguise, it is certainly well disguised.



In addition to foundation funders, *The Atlantic Monthly*/New America supplement had commercial sponsors. At an all-day kickoff event at the National Press Club, the room was festooned with banners from the likes of Shell Oil, Lockheed Martin, Archer Daniels Midland, Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft and the Nuclear Energy Institute. Does this sponsorship produce discreet self-censorship? In a moment when business allies of the Republican Party have a lock on national policy, *The Atlantic's* catalog of America's social ills and opportunities had scarcely a word about corporate abuses or corporate lobbying. At the Press Club event, Halstead and luncheon speaker Sen. John Breaux (D-La.) formed a mutual-admiration society. Breaux enthused about Halstead's book. Halstead heaped praise on the senator. But Breaux is no radical centrist. He is a fairly ordinary, moderate conservative. If the foundation's manifesto were ever reduced to legislation, we could count on Breaux to vote most of it down.

LET'S RETURN TO THE AFOREMENTIONED REPORT, "CROSSING Divides." The report was published by Demos, an organization created in 1999 by mainly liberal foundations to work on broadening political democracy and narrowing income inequality. At the forum I described, the other sponsoring organizations were the resolutely progressive Women's Union and the third way civic-reform group MassInc. Demos' cur-

based system has helped illuminate the hidden costs of work faced by all families and has spotlighted the problem of the low-wage labor market: the lack of good jobs that help workers escape poverty; inadequate health care and child care for low income workers; few opportunities for advancement; and pockets of high unemployment."

Unfortunately, this welcome shifting of the policy spotlight from lazy welfare queens to virtuous working families has made little practical difference in how low-wage work is rewarded. The Republicans have gone right on, toughening work requirements and shortchanging work supports and kids. The latest version of welfare reform is even more draconian than the 1996 one. Bush's budget has an estimated shortfall of \$5 billion to \$10 billion in the child-care funding needed to keep safe the children of the newest wave of working mothers.

A third brand of presumably innovative, post-ideological policy is promising policy that turned out badly, because the right played bait-and-switch. In 2001, Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) gamely negotiated a grand education compromise wherein Democrats supported high-stakes testing for public schools and President Bush agreed to provide more federal money. A year later, Bush broke the deal, and simply yanked the extra money. An example favorably cited in the Demos report is the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or SCHIP. In the early 1990s, Democrats were stymied in their efforts to

## **The trouble is, The Atlantic-New America Foundation package just doesn't add up to a winning politics. That's because it isn't serious about politics at all.**

rent president, Miles Rapoport, is a *Prospect* contributor. Demos does superb work, yet the hopeful premise of its latest report has largely been taken over by events, namely by Republican hegemony. "Crossing Divides" asserts, "During the last decade, Republicans and Democrats have come together to enact or expand several historic efforts to enhance economic well-being" in several policy areas. This is partly true, though it was truer before Bush took office.

The report's cases in point, if we unpack them, are an interesting blend of three distinct strands. Some older policy successes are indeed real breakthroughs that appealed to liberal and conservative constituencies, though for different reasons, and relied on genuine coalition politics. Exhibit A is the Earned Income Tax Credit. Liberals like it because it subsidizes wages and reduces poverty. Conservatives like it because it cuts taxes and uses the tax system rather than a programmatic bureaucracy to help the poor. Both sides like it because it rewards work rather than idleness and keeps families together. Score one for "beyond left and right."

A second category of supposed common ground, however, describes essentially conservative wins, where liberals were dragged along kicking and screaming and settled for relative crumbs. Take welfare reform, which Demos mentions only in passing: A more generous liberal version whose objective was to reward work and help children was simply sacrificed to conservative ideology in the "compromise" of 1996, the thrust of which was to coerce work. In these policies the devil was in the details. And the right, by playing hardball, has prevailed on most of the specifics. It's certainly true, as the Demos report deftly observes, that "the transformation of welfare to a work-

get universal insurance, so in 1997 they settled for SCHIP, a fill-in-the-cracks program for children in which the federal government gave the states more money to buy insurance for kids whose families neither had private health insurance nor qualified for Medicaid. Yes, it did increase the number of children with some kind of health insurance. A conceptual or programmatic breakthrough it was not, however. True to form, Bush is now shifting more of the Medicaid burden to the states, which will likely wipe out the past gains of SCHIP.

There is a famous economist joke in which a professor and his graduate student fall into a manhole, the student asks what to do and the economics professor replies, "Assume a ladder." By analogy, the post-ideologues are essentially saying, "Assume Elliot Richardson." The tacit political premise is that decent, moderate-to-liberal Brahmin Republicans such as Richard Nixon's late cabinet secretary are available and willing to broker honest, grand bargains that serve the public interest. In such a world, conservative means can often be used to achieve liberal ends, and honorable compromises can be brokered, as they in fact were in the Nixon era. But Karl Rove is no Elliot Richardson.

AT THE SAME TIME, ONE ASPECT OF THE RADICAL-CENTER view deserves to be taken very seriously. That is the expressly political critique that liberals and Democrats have failed to renew their historic bonds with voters. In this view, reform is blocked because traditional liberal appeals arouse neither swing voters (who often vote Republican) nor base voters (who often stay home), and politics itself becomes discredited. If so, a set of new ideas that breaks the mold is indeed the pre-

condition of modern liberalism and effective social reform.

Of course, the divisive issue is *which* specific ideas have both substantive merit and political legs. A variation on that argument has raged for two decades between the DLC and the labor movement, between *The Washington Monthly* and *The American Prospect*, between Walter Mondale and Gary Hart, between Bill Clinton and his uneasy supporters on the liberal left.

It is certainly true that the New Deal needs updating. But virtually everything in *The Atlantic* package—portable pensions, expansive parental-leave subsidies, modernized release and parole policies, asset-development accounts and the rest, except for a couple of essentially conservative ideas such as universal school vouchers—has been proposed by liberals and rejected by conservatives. The right simply isn't interested, except when the particulars (such as vouchers) serve as a stalking-horse to dismantle public institutions and social entitlements. Moreover, the trade-union movement—poster child for the radical-center claim that liberals are hopelessly out-of-date—has in fact made it a priority to organize new-economy service workers and immigrants, make work pay a living wage, create career ladders and collaborate innovatively with industry. But the main response of industry and its Republican allies is to annihilate the labor movement.

Substantively, the New America Foundation's proposed grand compromise is in many ways attractive: Let's make it easier for industry to thrive and for people to work, save and raise families by devising a portable and contributory set of entitlements that fits the economy of the 21st century. Leave out school vouchers and Democrats would take that deal in a heartbeat. But no such grand bargain appeals to the dominant Republican Party. To the right, this year's grand compromise is simply prologue to next year's juggernaut. Because of the right's political dominance, the admirable proposals in both the Demos report and the New America material are politically attainable only to the extent that the liberal left gets politically stronger and the radical right weaker.

President Clinton, let's recall, did endeavor to strike a big ideological deal when he tried to blend universal health coverage with delivery by private insurance companies, and when he pledged to end welfare as we know it. Far from reciprocating, the Republican right just redoubled its attacks. The welfare-reform bill that Clinton reluctantly signed in 1996 was very much in the spirit of the radical center, but its liberal aspects—reward work, create career ladders, help children—continue to be casualties of Republican fiscal policies and radically individualist view of family. And while there are candidates in the Democratic field to whom this worldview appeals, New Democrats such as Sen. John Edwards (N.C.) place far more faith in deficit reduction than in new programs, flexible or otherwise.

Deficit reduction is pure "radical center." The centrist elite has been promoting it since the early 1980s. Bill Clinton delivered it, but deficit reduction didn't win the Democrats many points among the electorate, nor did Republicans reciprocate. Almost immediately upon his election, Bush departed from the true path, but the voters just don't seem to care. Evidently you can build an energized politics around cutting taxes; alternatively, you can build an opposite politics around popular public outlay. But deficit reduction as an end in itself is politically sterile: It doesn't motivate voters,

nor does its opposite seem to alienate them.

It is still conceivable, at least in theory, that proponents of a radical center could create their own political movement for their own brand of change. But that, of course, requires not just policy papers and magazine articles but the usual paraphernalia of politics, namely candidates and parties. There is little evidence of a popular movement clamoring for Empowerment Zones.

In the end, the radical center seems to be one part robustly liberal policies in new packaging (paid parental leave, redistributive universal accounts) that would require direct confrontation of Republican hegemony, one part utopian ideas of public improvement that stand no prayer of enactment (total federal assumption of education funding), one part worthy but difficult process reforms that most liberals support (new, enriched voting systems) and one part dubious ideas (solve the health-insurance crisis by making bare-bones private-insurance coverage mandatory and then having government subsidize it). One can argue the merits of these policy ideas endlessly. The trouble is, the package just doesn't add up to a winning politics. That's because it isn't serious about politics at all.

ONE FURTHER ELEMENT IS MISSING FROM THIS RECURRING brand of high-minded reformism: To use a very unfashionable term, what's missing is struggle. Included in *The Atlantic Monthly*/New America Foundation collection is a very insightful piece by Gregory Rodriguez archly titled "Mongrel America." Rodriguez's point is that intermarriage is becoming increasingly accepted in the United States; ultimately, mixed race or multi-race identity, much as nativists have long feared, will likely be the most enduring form of American integration. Rodriguez accurately notes the contribution to this trend of Hispanic immigration from countries that have long had a more fluid concept of race. What he doesn't note is that today's greater casual tolerance of race mixing is also the fruit of profound political struggle.

Looking back on the Strom Thurmond–Trent Lott affair, Nicholas Lemann wrote an essay for *The New Yorker* that was ostensibly a review of a new volume of primary reports from the mid-century civil-rights movement. In attempting to put a lid on the Lott brouhaha, Republicans had airbrushed a very ugly history. Everyone today is supposedly a happy integrationist, even Thurmond. But what struck Lemann, in reviewing contemporary press accounts from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, was how radical an idea racial integration was at the time. In that era segregation was pervasive, and the sanctions for resisting it were brutal. Tolerance didn't just happen. It required immense personal risk, messy social movement, remarkable political victory, the power of reversed government policy and recurring battles over enforcement.

At a moment when the radical right is crushing moderates as well as liberals, a high-minded radical center is a false remedy for what ails the polity. What American liberalism needs is energy, passion and a straightforward program that appeals to alienated voters. This is, above all, a political enterprise, one that requires confronting conservative dominance. Yes, the power of ideas matters immensely. But so does the idea of power. ■

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# Breaking the Frame

**Susan Nall Bales has a lesson for progressive groups: Message matters. Get with it, or forget about making the world a better place.**

**BY CHRIS MOONEY**

WHEN COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANT SUSAN NALL BALES talks to environmental groups, she tells them that they can't fix government policies until they first fix themselves. For Bales, that means these groups must become acutely conscious of the stories that they're telling and the hidden chains of reasoning their narratives can set off in the public mind.

In explaining their issues, environmentalists tend to predict a wide range of disasters: catastrophic weather phenomena, species extinction, tropical pests heading north, you name it. The canonical example is probably Paul Ehrlich's 1968 book *The Population Bomb*, which began: "The battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the 1970's the world will undergo famines—hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death." The point is not whether environmentalists have science on their side; many of today's disaster forecasts, such as global warming, may well be accurate. But Bales can demonstrate why doomsday scenarios, factual or not, alienate voters.

She shows two slides. First she displays a cover of the children's book *Chicken Little*. When greens sound like Chicken Little, she says, the message is that the sky is falling, it's your fault and you have to lower your living standards. Not surprisingly, that message attracts only true believers. Then she puts up a second slide of *The Little Engine That Could*. A far better message is that good old American technology can solve environmental problems, and that citizens can hold government and business accountable if only they have the political will.

Susan Bales is not just another spin doctor. As president of the nonprofit FrameWorks Institute, she has synthesized four decades of social-science research into an approach called "strategic frame analysis," which is designed to help progressive groups understand public prejudices and thereby better advance their objectives. Bales has worked with advocacy groups on issues from child development and health care to foreign policy. She and her collaborators—pollster Meg Bostrom of Public Knowledge LLC, anthropologist Axel Aubrun and linguist Joseph Grady of the firm Cultural Logic, University of California, Los Angeles political scientist Frank D. Gilliam Jr. and numerous others—have gone beyond merely stressing better messages to advancing a whole new, empirically based communications model. It is one that liberal groups could definitely learn from.

A constant refrain in Bales' work is that people have

deeply held preconceptions ("frames") that render their views almost impervious to new, contradictory information. "It's not enough to present evidence," Bales says. "You have to change the frame."

IN SOCIAL SCIENCE, THE IDEA OF A CONCEPTUAL "FRAME" goes back to 1955, when the anthropologist Gregory Bateson first used the word to describe how preconceptions influence the way the public interprets and assesses a given political position or issue. In 1974 sociologist Erving Goffman published the book *Frame Analysis*, which explored how people think and make judgments from within a nexus of consistent narratives that help them to process information. Goffman's approach later merged with a similar trend in psychology and was applied by other researchers to the field of communications.

One premise of FrameWorks is that Americans overwhelmingly get their information about public affairs from the news media, which in turn establishes persistent frames. To help advocates, the FrameWorks team first surveys and analyzes past media coverage of an issue to detect the patterns or frames. They use extended cognitive interviewing or "elicitations," in addition to conventional polling and focus groups, to uncover the "hidden reasoning" or mental shortcuts that condition people's responses to the topic. Finally, Bales and her crew test out different "reframes" to learn how to open minds to new policy solutions. Often, as on the issue of global warming, the goal is to bridge the gap between a group of academic experts who have reached a consensus on a given problem and a political and media discourse that has placed their solution beyond the realm of possibility.

Strategic frame analysis is research intensive and geared toward the long term, which allows for welcome distance from the daily spin game. "If you're always running from the next political context to the next one to the next one, it's no wonder you can't say what you're for," says Bales.

SOME OF THE FAILURES OF WELL-INTENTIONED GROUPS to understand the power of frames would be comical if the stakes weren't so high. For instance, teenagers have a terrible reputation among the adult public because of the general perception of endemic teen violence, promiscuity, drug use and sloth. Thanks in part to the media, which frequently depicts teens in the context of crimes, accidents or frivolous pursuits, this stereotypical view of adolescents is deeply embedded. Indeed, a poll by Bostrom found that just 16 percent

of Americans believe that “young people under the age of 30 share most of their moral and ethical values.” Rather, youth are viewed as self-absorbed and materialistic.

Why does this matter? If the public is convinced that teens have rotten values—that the whole problem is with the individual or his or her no-good parents—it’s very hard to gain support for social investment but easy to pass extremely punitive laws for youth offenders. If, on the other hand, most teens are seen as potentially solid citizens, they will be deemed deserving of support.

Most young people are not, in fact, out trashing the neighborhood. But how to change public perceptions? In 1997 the National Crime Prevention Council and The Advertising Council ran an ad campaign that proved too clever by half. Titled “Prove Them Wrong By Doing Something Right,” the ads sought to inspire teenagers to subvert anti-youth stereotypes by becoming active in opposing crime among their peers. But the advertisements used harsh stereotypes, such as an image of a young skateboarder with his hat on backward and the words “Vandal,” “Heroin Addict” and “Purse Snatcher” superimposed over it. Only in smaller print could one read “... all kicked out with the help of kids like me.” The problem, Bales and company say, is that once you conjure a powerful and negative stereotypical frame such as troubled teens, you can’t just suppress it again. “Think of it as the reptilian brain being triggered,” jokes Aubrun. “Once that’s there, it’s going to last a little while.”

FrameWorks has worked with the William T. Grant Foundation to systematically investigate how to alter defeatist public perceptions of teenagers. Simply presenting widely available data that cast teens in a more positive light can’t reverse anti-youth stereotypes. “Over the course of six focus groups with parents, we observed astonishing unanimity in the way adults discounted positive statistics about youth,” report Bales and Gilliam in a study on adolescence. So, seeking a new frame, the FrameWorks crew tested several hypotheses, including the seemingly promising idea that depicting adolescents working would appeal to adults’ respect for industriousness and responsibility. That also failed utterly. “They interpreted it as purely self-interest on the part of teens,” says Gilliam. “That they wanted new Xboxes and Air Jordans and Sony PlayStations.”

FrameWorks retraced its steps and considered other frames. Depicting teens in the context of athletic competition and volunteering had garnered some more positive reactions. Bales and Gilliam also advanced the idea of using “seniors to attest to youth’s worthiness,” because older Americans “appear to convey a lifetime of work habits and values.” To see both the power of anti-youth prejudices and the possibility

of reframing, consider a recent issue of *Context*, a magazine Gilliam edits. The cover shows a close-up of an African American teenager reaching for something. Turn the page and you see the full wide-angle context: He’s at the library reaching for his library card. This demonstrates both the power of prejudices and the possibility of reframing.

IF SUSAN BALES WERE GIVING ADVICE ABOUT HOW TO write this article, she would probably say to mention her as little as possible. It’s not that Bales is shy, though she keeps a low profile compared with other veteran Washington communications consultants. Her reasons would be more theoretical.

A constant theme in her work, clearly evident in the FrameWorks research on teens, is that the media’s penchant for anecdotal or human-interest stories distracts from a more systemic presentation of social problems. In fact, such cov-



**A compelling frame of mind: Susan Nail Bales of the FrameWorks Institute**

erage places implicit blame on individuals, rather than government or society, for hardships and is thus inherently hostile to liberal policy solutions. So if this article were just about Bales—her background in English and French literature, how she works from her home in the woods of Potomac, Md., has five cats and once had to rescue a captured chipmunk from one of them in the middle of a FrameWorks conference call—it might be part of the problem.

That’s why this story isn’t only about Bales, though it uses her as a narrative device. (Some journalistic habits die hard.) It’s just as much about liberal activists who are despondent after Republican victories in the last two elections and on the defensive as the Bush administration pursues sweeping deregulatory policies for the environment and in other areas. Many of these advocates are casting about for a new approach. Some may even be willing to suppress their instinctual reservations about coming off as calculating and Machiavellian, instead of idealistic, pure and high-minded. But it’s still a tough struggle. “There was a huge resistance to this,” says Diane Benjamin, director of the Minnesota KIDS COUNT project and a FrameWorks devotee, about her



group's implementation of strategic frame analysis. "Either people thought it didn't matter what their media message was or they felt it was somehow selling out to be strategic about how they think about issues."

FOUNDED IN 1999, FRAMEWORKS GREW OUT OF BALES' two decades of experience in communications, starting with her work on women's- and civil-rights issues and continuing through her years at the firm Public Affairs Research and Communications, which consulted for a wide range of liberal groups. Among other projects, Bales worked for the National Women's Law Center to oppose the nomination of Robert Bork to the Supreme Court. Later, during the late Bush Senior and early Clinton years, Bales organized the Coalition for America's Children and its campaign, called "Who's For Kids and Who's Just Kidding?", which coordinated more than 300 groups dedicated to raising the visibility of children's concerns as real "voting issues."

But something was missing. Bales began to doubt whether the news coverage she was getting was actually advancing the issues she cared about. At the same time, she was reading the work of Stanford University communications theorist Shanto Iyengar, who observed in his 1987 book *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion* that most media coverage uses "episodic," rather than "thematic," frames. In other words, the dominant media approach is an anecdotal story that focuses on individuals and their problems but is short on social context or a discussion of public issues. As Bales read more deeply in the academic literature, she realized that advocacy groups and the foundations that fund them weren't integrating this knowledge of how the mass media affects political debate into their public-relations practices. No wonder they were getting burned.

Bales threw down the gauntlet before funders, journalists and liberal advocates at a 1995 Brandeis University conference that she organized called "Media Matters: The Institute on News and Social Problems." "All those engaged in describing, analyzing, and intervening in social problems need to rethink media, discarding the old clipbook mentality born out of a publicity-oriented approach," argued a group document signed by Bales and other conference collaborators. The paper called on foundations in particular to rethink their traditional "we don't fund media" paradigm, which had relegated communications to a second-tier pursuit. When it came to work in the trenches, meanwhile, advocates needed to learn that more media coverage wasn't necessarily better. In fact, by putting out ill-conceived messages and reinforcing stereotypes that hurt their ultimate objectives, liberal groups were engaged in nothing less than "the media equivalent of friendly fire."

Why do conservatives seem to communicate better than liberals? One reason for the liberal left's chronic difficulty is a tendency to overintellectualize issues. Liberals bombard the media and the public with figures and statistics that prove their case. But again and again the data glance off without making any impression, and the issues don't go anywhere. "If the facts don't fit the frame, it's the facts that are rejected, not the frame," is an oft-repeated FrameWorks aphorism. For a classic example of overintellectualization, think of Al Gore in one of the presidential debates assuming his audience would get a reference to the Dingell-Norwood bill.

RUSH LIMBAUGH WAS UP TO HIS USUAL TRICKS AS I DROVE my rental car out to visit Susan Bales at her home in Potomac. The car happened to have been set to Limbaugh's station when I picked it up, and with liberal talk radio still little more than a distant dream, I went with the flow.

I'd listened to Limbaugh before, of course, but everything he was saying that gray afternoon seemed cast into a new light—reframed—by what I'd already learned from Bales. Rather than an arrogant windbag, Limbaugh suddenly seemed like a brilliant conservative tactician. Counterintuitively he told his listeners that they should be *glad* when liberal groups attack the president on something like war with Iraq. If the liberals are on the attack, Limbaugh explained, that means they're not putting forward a positive agenda—and *that* means conservatives are winning.

"Unfortunately, the research would say he's right," said Bales when I told her of Limbaugh's advice. "Negative attacks by many of the groups, like children's advocates and environmentalists, that we see as being caring kinds of groups do more damage to them than they do to the opposition. That's one of the real hardships [of] liberal advocacy."

That and the fact that conservatives, from Limbaugh on down the line, already know how to come up with clever frames and stick with them. Take the "death tax," the right's reframing of the estate tax. According to a report in *The New York Times*, Republicans spent five years teaching their troops to use this terminology. One lobbyist, Jack Faris of the National Federation of Independent Business, even hit on the idea of making everyone in his office who used the wrong phrasing put a dollar into a "pizza fund." Soon Newt Gingrich instituted the pizza-fund concept on Capitol Hill—and today, Republicans always say "death tax." A similar story could be told of the frame "partial-birth abortion," an extremely rare procedure that the right renamed for propaganda purposes. The *Times* also reported recently that Republican pollster Frank Luntz has circulated an entire lexicon on how to rename environmental issues in a way that benefits the Republican Party.

Among Democrats, Bill Clinton seemed to have an intuitive feel for the frame game. His resolution to talk about "gun safety" rather than "gun control" was as good a reframe as it gets, notes Cornell University communications professor Dietram Scheufele. But it's not easy for many on the liberal left, in part because progressives seem to have a hard time being disciplined about message, preferring tolerance of wide diversity. At the Seattle anti-globalization protests and in the recent anti-war demonstrations, radical messages and realist ones were casually intermingled. But protests characterized by extremism, anti-Americanism and violence can only be expected to alienate moderates who might otherwise have questioned the Bush administration's Iraq policy, notes *San Diego Union-Tribune* columnist Rich Louv, who has worked with Bales in the past. Observing the current protests through the FrameWorks lens, Louv notes, "They're so hesitant to consciously frame what they're doing, because they believe in 'let a thousand flowers bloom.'"

ISN'T ALL OF THIS JUST A MORE ELABORATE FORM OF SPIN? The people at FrameWorks characterize themselves as serious social scientists who happen to be progressives but won't work for either political party. They believe that if liberals and conservatives had equal access to resources and state-of-

the-art techniques for getting their messages out, liberals would win more battles than they currently do. Strategic frame analysis, says UCLA's Gilliam, is "totally nonpartisan." "We can't control who asks us to apply it to their problems. We could do tobacco if we wanted to. We haven't," he quickly adds, "and we probably wouldn't."

FrameWorks is walking something of a tightrope with this posture. For example, University of California, Berkeley cognitive linguist George Lakoff, author of the book *Moral Politics: What Conservatives Know That Liberals Don't*, has worked closely with FrameWorks in the past but believes that, in some ways, it doesn't go far enough. In particular, Lakoff doubts whether FrameWorks' project-by-project approach can unify progressives behind a "common moral vision" capable of rivaling the sense of shared purpose on the right. Nor can FrameWorks fight back. "They have to be positive. What that means is, you can't attack the conserva-

SUSAN BALES COMES ACROSS AS SCHOLARLY AND UNFAILINGLY collaborative, always interested in bringing in new intellectuals to talk about framing. But she's also a charismatic and passionate figure who has her liberal heroes. Martin Luther King Jr. is often cited as one who knew, intuitively, how to stay on message without sacrificing inspiration. Another is the famed World War II correspondent Ernie Pyle, who just happens to have been a relation. The Bales and Pyle families had adjacent farms in Dana, Ind. What is her exact relationship to Pyle? "You can call it cousin; it probably works in Indiana," Bales jokes. She may also be his reincarnation.

Bales has written of Pyle's columns in which the journalist crossed the nation describing how the New Deal could fix the system rather than just help individuals. She concludes, "Progressives have also lost the ability to translate from individuals to programs, and from programs back to individuals."



Another ineffective doomsday message: Greenpeace protests Europe's global-warming policy.

tives," says Lakoff. "But oftentimes you have to."

Conversely, neutral watchers of the spin wars fear the FrameWorks methodology provides a potent new weapon in the ever-escalating public-relations arms race. "I'm worried that press secretaries and PR flacks are going to start carrying cards around with bullet-pointed principles based on this kind of research in their pocket, and will devote even more attention to shaping people's perceptions as opposed to honest give and take," says Brendan Nyhan, co-editor of the Web site Spinsanity.com, which tracks manipulations of political language and debate.

The FrameWorks group insists that its mission is fundamentally about enhancing democracy by opening minds that have been dulled by spin, or constantly forced into confrontational and partisan modes of thought. "Framing is in many ways the opposite of spinning. Spinning is trying to convince people, 'You know, this really isn't blue, it's really green,'" argues pollster Bostrom, holding up a glass from the conference-room table during my group meeting with FrameWorks' members. "What we're trying to do is help people understand not just that it's blue but the shape, the size, the weight."

"I continue to believe that Pyle's style of journalism is a real antidote to the kind of popularized television news [format]," says Bales. In a 1939 column about poverty in the rural South—namely Elba, Ala.—Pyle put it this way: "They have a way of using the word 'sorry' down here that I've not heard in other parts of the country. A listless, no-good, poor-paying fellow is known as sorry. You can be poor without being sorry. You're sorry when you lack character." But Pyle wouldn't let these economic problems be described as mere personal failings. "You can't blame any individual, least of all the poor people themselves," he wrote. "No, it's a combination of the landlord and the supply merchant and poor land and low prices and sickness and ignorance—in other words, it's the whole system."

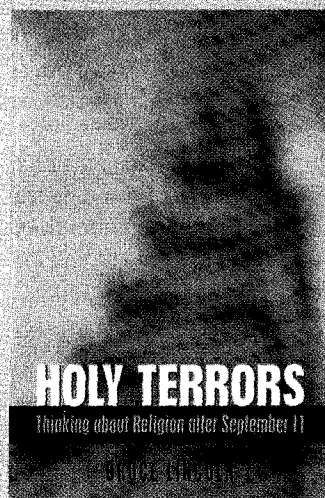
"It will take generations to get the rural South raised above its system," Pyle concluded. "Sorryness is a disease that America hasn't paid much attention to before now. It will take a long time to purge it." And, Bales suspects, a long time to get journalists to write like that again. ■

CHRIS MOONEY is a contributing writer for the Prospect.



# Issues of the Day

## New books from Chicago



### Holy Terrors

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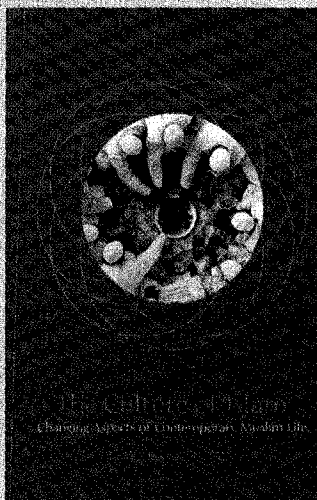
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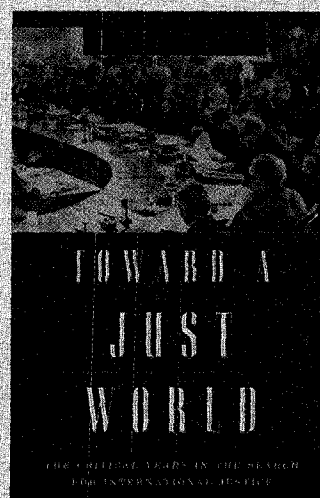
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# Currents

## MEDIA



Hey, hey, ho, ho: Op-ed doves have got to go.

## The Pro-War Post

The paper's opinion columns turn hawkish on Iraq.

BY TODD GITLIN

WHAT'S THE ROLE OF AN OP-ED PAGE? Echo chamber for a newspaper's editorials? Ping-Pong table for both sides of the story? Or supplier of third, fourth, and nth sides and angles of the polyhedral truth? The reader might guess that this writer prefers a lively page that improves the debate, makes new arguments and surveys intelligent thought from all manner of viewpoints. If you're *The Wall Street Journal*, the answer is (excepting Al Hunt) "echo chamber." No surprise there. It's rather more odd that if you're *The Washington Post*, the disconcerting answer, at least during December and January, was also echo chamber. To pump up its chorus of hawkish editorials, the *Post* called up a flock of yes-birds. For the 12-week pe-

riod of Dec. 1 through Feb. 21, hawkish op-ed pieces numbered 39, dovish ones 12—a ratio of more than 3-to-1. The doves have been coming from behind—though probably too late to shake the White House.

In December the total number of dovish columns, including columnists, was, to stretch the sum, two: a moral appeal by former U.S. Rep. Bob Edgar (D-Pa.), head of the National Council of Churches, and a skein of questions by William Raspberry—good, legitimate policy questions, eminently worth asking, but still questions. The number of unequivocally hawkish columns: 11.

In January the paper's ratio was four dovish pieces to 17 hawkish ones. You might think this a bit of a pile-on, and

you would be right. The editorials during December and January numbered nine, and all were hawkish. This editorial mood continued into February, culminating in a blast at the French and Germans headlined "Standing With Saddam." Apparently it's not only George W. Bush who doesn't "nuance."

Now for the refreshing news: During the first three weeks of February, the *Post* played ratio catch-up. From Feb. 1–21, it ran six anti-war pieces, 11 pro-war ones and 10 that were ambivalent or non-committal. Note also this oddity: In its Feb. 5 summary editorial, "The Case for Action," the *Post* took issue with "those who advocate containment through inspections," charging that they "ignore that strategy's costly failure during the 1990s." But Saddam Hussein was kept in his box after the Gulf War, and he is far weaker today than he was in 1991. The real failure of containment would come only if he *used* weapons of mass destruction—which is most likely if he's attacked. But if readers of the *Post*'s editorial pages were looking for a thorough debate of the options, they would have found but a single column advocating "containment through inspections." This was a Jan. 28 piece by the Carnegie Endowment's Jessica Mathews, who pioneered the supremely useful notion of "coercive inspections," which the Bush administration considers a "nonstarter" for reasons it doesn't get around to specifying. Then, to its credit, on Feb. 9, the Sunday "Outlook" section ran a second long, well-informed piece by Mathews detailing "truly muscular inspections" as a practical alternative to all-out war.

On Feb. 11, the *Post* editorial pages also ran former Pentagon official Morton H. Halperin's "A Case for Containment," which argued for a "containment-plus" [See "Deter and Contain," *TAP*, Nov. 4, 2002.] that would entail "tightened sanctions, beefed-up inspections, sup-



port for opposition groups and the creation of a [United Nations] war-crimes tribunal." Halperin proposed force short of all-out war, "stationing UN-authorized troops on Iraq's borders," backing weapons inspectors with force, "destroying from the air any building to which inspectors are denied entrance." Thus did Halperin put the lie to the White House notion that the choice is strictly between "action" and "doing nothing."

Hawks unquestionably have their arguments. Various pro-war cases deserve to be made, as does the point that they sometimes clash. If the administration makes these arguments shoddily, they still deserve to be made cogently somewhere. An op-ed page does not have to be mechanically balanced, with so many "nays" to so many "yeas." But neither should it be turned over to the memo

other complicating points was made in good English on the openDemocracy Web site by Michael Naumann, formerly minister of culture in German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's cabinet and now publisher and editor of *Die Zeit*. True, last November, as Michael Massing reported in *The Nation*, *Post* editorial-page editor Fred Hiatt approached Schröder and German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, but they declined. Yet the only German to appear on the editorial pages during the 12-week period I surveyed was Christian Democratic leader Angela Merkel, who supports Bush.

And why stop at "Old Europeans"? There are "New American" dissenters, including think-tankers galore who are not soft on Hussein and who make realistic arguments against war. There are Eastern Europeans, Latin Americans,

informed, and the water he carries for the White House is sometimes acidic. On Jan. 26, for example, he wrote that "Iraqis who met with Bush on Jan. 10 were surprised at how little he seemed to know about the embryonic plans for a democratic, federal Iraq or about the organized opposition to Saddam Hussein."

But some of the *Post*'s hawks only swing for the fences. On Feb. 12, for example, Michael Kelly devoted his column to smearing Germany's Fischer. Kelly, a verbal cartoonist, has no qualms about getting in his reader's face. "Mr. Fischer, who are you?" he writes. "For the formative years of your political life, you were no man in a blue government suit. You were a man in a black motorcycle helmet." Smack! Thwack! To make this case, Kelly rests exclusively on Paul Berman's splendid *New Republic* report from 2001—or rather, on half of it. That's because Berman's piece intelligently and comprehensively tracked Fischer from the latter's revolutionist stance of the 1960s to his interventionist one of the '90s, a time when the foreign minister fervently supported intervention against then-Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milosevic in Bosnia and Kosovo. (After Berman's piece came out, Fischer went on to incur the wrath of many Greens by supporting the U.S. attack on the Taliban.) The whole point of Berman's profile was that Fischer grew up. He overcame his knee-jerk anti-Zionism and his automatic "yes" to everyone who said "no" to Washington or Zion. It's the fact that Fischer no longer casts an automatic "no" that gives force to his position on an Iraq war. When Fischer shakes his finger at Rumsfeld and says, "I am not convinced," he means what he says: that he is open to arguments but the one that Rumsfeld puts forward is not convincing.

But this is too subtle for Kelly, who relishes the sound of his own snickers. Who can forget his trashing last September of Al Gore's anti-war, anti-Bush doctrine appeal? For example: "Gore's speech was one no decent politician could have delivered. It was dishonest, cheap, low. ... It was breathtakingly hypocritical, a naked political assault delivered in tones of moral condescension from a man pretending to be superior to mere politics. It was wretched. It was vile. It was contemptible. But I understate." Kelly

## As the only serious daily newspaper in the nation's capital, *The Washington Post* should stoke up the strongest possible counterarguments.

prose of out-of-office officials, making it read like a sheaf of communiqués. Nor ought there to be a special dispensation for heaven-bent opponents of war who offer no solace to the brutalized Iraqis, refuse to explore the awfulness of Hussein's tyranny or disdain the language of human rights because it has been pre-contaminated by Bush.

But the *Post* could publish anyone in the world it likes. While the editorials are trashing the sluggish herd of appeasing swine ("Standing With Saddam," Feb. 11), the newspaper could find more than a single "Old European"—Justin Vaisse of the Brookings Institution—who is not that. It could have its pick of Europeans who propose a reinforcement of Hussein's containment box and who otherwise defy Washington's blithe stereotype of the Franco-German axis of baguette-and-wurst. These Europeans might remind Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his cheerleaders, who box up Germany with Libya and Cuba as members of the "axis of don't-go-there," that this selfsame Germany is currently contributing 2 billion euros a year into post-war Afghan reconstruction. This among

Africans and Asians who surely have a stake in the world economy and the fate of Islamic fundamentalism. There are academic realists such as John Mearsheimer, Stephen Walt, Richard Betts, Robert Jervis and Kenneth Waltz who take containment seriously. We know these people exist because they have published cautionary arguments in *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times* and *Foreign Affairs*. There are hesitant generals, one of whom, Wesley Clark, was given a voice in a David Ignatius *Post* column on Jan. 31. [See "Meet Mr. Credibility," *TAP*, March 2003.] There are anti-warriors, some of them Iraqis in exile, who are not naive about Hussein's wickedness or power. (One, Faleh A. Jabar of Birkbeck College at the University of London, had a sensible contribution in the January issue of *The Progressive*.)

There are, in short, a host of hat colors, not just white and black. If the *Post* were interested in elevating the level of debate, it could do a good deal more.

SOME OF THE *POST*'S COLUMNISTS DO know an argument when they see one. The hawkish Jim Hoagland is well-

makes light of his allergy to understatement. But this does not make his high-percussion performance more honorable. Kelly's readers would have no idea that, as former Ambassador Peter Galbraith wrote in a letter to the *Post* on Sept. 27, 2002, Gore in 1988 "was one of the original sponsors of the Prevention of Genocide Act, which would have imposed comprehensive sanctions on Iraq for gassing its Kurdish population. The bill passed the Senate but died in the House in the face of Reagan administration opposition."

Part of the problem at the *Post* is the mildness and self-vexation of liberals. Regular columnists Hoagland, Kelly, George F. Will and Charles Krauthammer abhor doubt; counterparts Raspberry, Richard Cohen, E. J. Dionne Jr. and Mary McGrory are in the doubt

business. Now, there's value in unpredictability. Doubt, including self-doubt, is refreshing in pundits. But the doubt ratio is terribly skewed—in American politics overall, not just at the *Post*. When you are the only serious daily newspaper in the nation's capital, even if you have been yanked rightward by the government's center of gravity, you should stoke up the strongest possible counterarguments. When your editorials read like direct transcriptions from *The West Wing*, it's all the more imperative to instigate robust debate. Editorial pages should shy away from the Vince Lombardi theory that winning is the only thing that counts. ■

TODD GITLIN is a professor of journalism and sociology at Columbia University.

volvement in that country. Focused on a symbolic love triangle between a naive American do-gooder, a jaded British journalist and the Englishman's Vietnamese mistress, the novel was called anti-American after its publication—and prescient after the U.S. foray into Vietnam began. During the conflict, the book found a following among U.S. correspondents stationed there; these days, young boys hawk pirated copies on the streets of Ho Chi Minh City.

Although there's no telling how prescient the film will prove about our future engagements in other countries, it has already suffered from the same charges that Greene's book faced. Ready for release in the fall of 2001, the film was held back after September 11 by Miramax executives who worried, according to co-Chairman Harvey Weinstein, that opening a movie about "bad Americans" would be "unpatriotic." After lead actor Michael Caine rallied to the film's defense, Miramax screened it last November in New York and Los Angeles (so that it would qualify for the Oscars) and opened a limited release nationwide in February.

It's a pity the movie is still so difficult to find in theaters. While some might say its lessons are more apt for history and a country in thrall to far-off Red Scares, *The Quiet American* warns us of the potential dangers of American arrogance and violent international engagement—a message with real relevance to our present, hair-trigger geopolitical moment. But it also illustrates something subtler: the psychology that can lead to that violence. It shows us how little America—blinded by hubris, power or sheer good intentions—may understand the rest of the world. These days America is dealing with the flip side of *The Quiet American's* feminized Other, that Asian woman fought over by two white men. In her stead, we have her more difficult male relatives—these dangerous men, reduced to images of thugs and madmen, who must be paddled and sent to their rooms. But one thing holds true: In the rush to pave the world's way to safety and democracy, *The Quiet American* seems to imply, the United States fails to see faraway places as anything more than ideological or strategic battlegrounds, fails to see those countries' citizens as equals—or even actors—in a global dialogue. And

## FILM



A face in the crowd: Michael Caine as the not-so-quiet Englishman

# Paved With Good Intentions

*The Quiet American* and the din of imperialism

BY NOY THRUPKAEW

WHAT WOULD GRAHAM GREENE DO? Or more to the point, what would he write about our current time, its terrorist horrors, its shadows of war on the horizon? Perhaps our situation would sound familiar to the author, who set a similarly foreboding scene

in his 1955 novel *The Quiet American*, the subject of Phillip Noyce's recent film adaptation.

The book takes place in Vietnam before French colonial death spasms gave way to our *Apocalypse Now*, and it offers a scathing critique of the nascent U.S. in-



if those people are not real to us, we will not hesitate to kill their bodies to save their souls, to paraphrase Lord Byron's epigram in Greene's book.

AMERICA'S REPRESENTATIVE IN GREENELAND doesn't seem so threatening at first. The quiet American is just a terrible dancer, a great galoot in a white suit, listing forward and shuffling like a bear. Phuong (Do Thi Hai Yen) is patient: The exquisite former taxi dancer has dealt with drunkards and other things far worse than a would-be gallant with two left feet. At his request, she tests her eager partner with some Vietnamese. "When you dance, don't try to lead," she says. He furrows his big brow in puzzlement—it's a lost cause.

In the eyes of *The Quiet American's* British narrator, that scene may well sum

ungraspable as smoke. I am always wary of the use of empty women characters as stand-ins for countries where the West has gotten into scrapes. But in Greene's novel, *all* the characters are mere vessels for the author's acid views on U.S. foreign policy.

Unlike Joseph Mankiewicz, who directed a 1958 adaptation that completely excised the writer's damning indictment (and left Greene in a permanent fury about Hollywood treatments of his books), Noyce thankfully doesn't defang that critique. And in a pleasant surprise, the new film actually manages to enrich the human aspect of the novel, thanks in no small part to its actors.

Fraser uses his bulk, his Boy Scout bonhomie, to good effect. He lopes onto the scene like a half-grown golden re-

pletely into Fowler's emotional brittleness, the conflicted affection and rivalry he feels toward Pyle.

Caine is at his finest in the film's most traumatic scene—a bomb explosion that leaves innocents dead and dismembered and transforms everything in its path. The journalistic skills Fowler has used to distance himself from the world are instantly charged with power: Within seconds he goes from blasé observer to horrified participant. "There was a woman with a baby," he says, trembling with the memory. "She covered it with her hat." And out of this hellish murk comes Pyle, jarringly transformed, speaking a torrent of Vietnamese and swiping impatiently at his bloody pants. Greene's Pyle doesn't have this callous reaction; he's stunned sick, more in keeping with the sheltered boy we have grown to both like and scorn. In turning his Pyle into a sudden hobgoblin, Noyce cheapens his film a bit, sticks us with a twist: Did we ever really know him at all?

Perhaps that's the point Noyce is trying to make, if a bit clumsily. After all, what are we to think when Fowler himself is jerked out of habitual inertia, taking up a course of action that leads to the demise of another kind of innocence? And can anyone know Phuong? Noyce is too sensitive a filmmaker to have overlooked her. In a sort of political cinematic statement, he left the bomb scene in the hands of Vietnamese second unit director Dang Nhat Minh, whose father was killed in a U.S. bombing raid. Minh cast the scene with Vietnamese who had survived Agent Orange exposure or mine explosions. Covered with fake blood and raw meat, their limbless bodies offer a mute, horrifying testimony on the lingering pain of Vietnam's American war. Hai Yen is given nearly as little to say as these extras, but she manages to convey some of the silken strength in the character of Phuong (which translates, aptly, as "phoenix"). If we don't know her, Noyce seems to imply, perhaps it's because Pyle and Fowler don't either—nor do they understand the inscrutable Orient they've forced her to represent.

Despite these flashes of insight, Noyce's movie has more inspired moments and atmospheric emotion than true cohesion. Nor does the film live up to Greene's insistence on moral ambi-

## Despite flashes of insight, Phillip Noyce's version of *The Quiet American* has more inspired moments and atmospheric emotion than true cohesion.

up the whole of Alden Pyle (Brendan Fraser)—a clumsy white knight who disrespects the toes of a damsel in no need of rescue. And as both Noyce and Greene make clear, Pyle is a not-so-subtle metaphor for America itself, and how it crashes into the outside world with the best of intentions.

Thomas Fowler (Caine) is the aging, dissolute journalist watching this painful scene. He is English, he tells us, and as the English are wont to do, he has habits: Phuong, an opium pipe and Vietnam, which is filmed in all its languorous beauty by cinematographer Chris Doyle. Fowler is content, with nary an opinion on Vietnam's political turmoil that would mar his personal land of the lotus-eaters. Content, that is, until Pyle threatens both to take Phuong away and forever change the country itself. Pyle's ostensibly an economic aid worker, you see, but he seems to be determined to strike a blow for democracy in Vietnam—in any way he can.

It's an awkward, three-legged waltz: the Brit representing cynical "Old Europe," Pyle as the idealistic American upstart and both sparring for the soul of Asia, depicted by a woman as pliant and

trier, obedience school no match for a lashing tail and too-large feet. Outfitted with a crew cut, Boston Red Sox cap, Clark Kent glasses and the writings of the fictional York Harding, a gung-ho democracy advocate, Fraser's Pyle is clearly someone who has read too much and lived too little. Just before his dance with Phuong, Pyle finds himself in the company of louder, uglier Americans, and is mauled by a flood of prostitutes, like a fish caught in an anemone's devouring grasp. When he holds Phuong a little later, is it any surprise that this good boy falls for her like a stone, wants to rescue her from the other women's fate?

Not to Fowler, who observes that Pyle is the type who would mistake saving a woman with saving a country. Fowler is wry, he is British, but he holds a terrified love for Phuong beneath the barbs he throws Pyle's way. Caine may be some years too old for the role, but he erases some of the despairing age—the death obsession, the crusty bitterness of something boiled over and burned—from Greene's Fowler. It's a brilliant, selfless performance, free from actorly flourishes and hamming. Caine disappears com-

guity, his rejection of the tatty, homespun homilies of “good” and “evil” that are so popular these days. All’s not fair in love and war, Greene seems to whisper, and the best we can hope for is a sort of compromised grace. And while Greene might not judge between oblivious idealism and self-aware complicity, Noyce does. But they both agree on

the ultimate point: It is best to lay both innocence and cynicism down, for they obscure one’s ability to truly see that person from half a world away—the one who’s standing just an arm’s length off on a darkened dance floor. ■

NOY THRUPKAEW is a writer who lives near Washington, D.C.

## BOOKS

# Why We Need Europe

BY STEPHEN HOLMES

OF PARADISE AND POWER: AMERICA AND EUROPE IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER  
BY ROBERT KAGAN • KNOPF • 112 PAGES • \$18.00

FRANCE AND GERMANY’S REFUSAL TO accept the Bush administration’s definition of the Iraqi threat has made shockingly visible the decade-long weakening of the Atlantic alliance. Robert Kagan looks behind such wars of words to discover why, after the end of the Cold War, Europeans and Americans “understand each other less and less.” Unbelievable as it may sound, his thesis is that Europeans and Americans have trouble coordinating their foreign policies because Europeans are utopian and deluded and Americans are tough-minded and unafraid to look reality in the face. He first advanced this unusual claim in an essay published in the summer of 2002, which he has now updated and expanded into a book. That essay quickly became a sensation among European diplomats and policy-makers. But how did a conservative American polemicist such as Kagan manage to provoke such storms of soul searching among Europeans? He did so partly by suggesting that European nations, despite their endless squabbles, share more values with one another than they share with the United States, an idea that some Europeans, at least, devoutly wish to be true. He also attracted attention by implying that Europe’s own foreign-policy disarray has contributed fatally to the United States’ dangerous unilateralism.

While mentioning that “the crisis over Iraq has cast the transatlantic problem in the harshest possible light,” Kagan seeks the roots of U.S.–European tensions in the different military pos-

tures of the world’s two great economic powers. In his view, “The key difference is less a matter of culture and philosophy than of capability.” The premise of his argument here is intriguing: Rather than searching for tools to achieve their pre-established goals, both individuals and states, Kagan believes, unconsciously adapt their desired objectives to their available resources. In short, capabilities create intentions. Because the United States is a military colossus and Europe is a military pygmy, they will never agree about the shape of the dangers they face. Kagan drives his point home with the following folktale:

The psychology of weakness is easy enough to understand. A man armed only with a knife may decide that a bear prowling the forest is a tolerable danger, inasmuch as the alternative—hunting the bear armed only with a knife—is actually riskier than lying low and hoping the bear never attacks. The same man armed with a rifle, however, will likely make a different calculation of what constitutes a tolerable risk. Why should he risk being mauled to death if he doesn’t need to? This perfectly normal human psychology has driven a wedge between the United States and Europe.

This little passage contains the gist of Kagan’s argument. It is not simply that Americans, being armed to the teeth, are willing to venture forth in search of monsters to slay while Europeans, being military weaklings, pusillanimously shun confrontations.

It is rather that weak powers routinely fail to take the full measure of actual threats, indulging in the fantasy that looming dangers can be allayed by diplomatic finesse and international law, while strong powers are able to see the floodlit world as a frighteningly dangerous place where freedom will perish if not defended by force.

For their part, Europeans want us to interpret a devotion to multilateralism, diplomacy and international law as a sign of superior morality. But Kagan sees the European fondness for multilateral solutions as a symptom of helplessness, or perhaps as an expression of resentment. Tacitly drawing on Nietzsche’s genealogy of morals, the author argues that Europeans are slyly trying to unman their American allies by employing “strategies of weakness.” They hope to hobble the United States by slow-walking it into diplomatic negotiations and international legal regimes. “In what may be the ultimate feat of subtlety and indirection,” Kagan writes, “they want to control the behemoth by appealing to its conscience.” And, he warns, these devilishly crafty Europeans may even succeed in derailing the United States from sober realism into the pursuit of pacifist illusions, presumably with some help from homegrown Wilsonian idealists and Vietnam-era liberals.

This Euro-liberal attempt to charm the United States into abandoning war as an instrument of foreign policy, Kagan maintains, is a self-defeating folly. Even today, more than a half-century after the destruction of Nazi Germany, Europe’s pampered civilians remain “dependent on the United States’ willingness to use its military might to deter or defeat those around the world who still believe in power politics.” European leaders, therefore, should simply admit “the vital necessity of having a strong, even predominant America.” If Europeans would learn to defer politely to the United States, Kagan expects or hopes that American officials would return the courtesy by avoiding gratuitous put-downs that serve no purpose other than deflating European self-importance.

## AMERICA AS MARS, EUROPE AS VENUS

Kagan’s intellectual framework may seem rather unsophisticated, but it does



boast a philosophical foundation. Its premise is that a domestic realm built along liberal lines, where force and fraud are repressed and the rule of law prevails, can be stabilized and defended only by a vigorous foreign policy—where force and even fraud are deployed ruthlessly against unscrupulous adversaries and where laws are respected only when convenient. Kantian dreamers of peace and reason may not know it, but their hyperliberal utopia always depends on a Hobbesian willingness to apply organized violence, without regard to rules, to fend off barbarians at the gate. It is naive to believe that a dangerously turbulent world can be managed by United Nations resolutions, foreign aid, diplomatic negotiations and a deepening of commercial ties.

That Kagan's argument here has some force will be recognized even by those who strenuously disagree with it. The same cannot be said for the emo-

on the experience of the Cold War, when Americans and Europeans agreed on a definition of a common threat even though their military capacities were just as asymmetrical as they are today. Countries that are militarily weak will sometimes defer quietly to allies that are militarily strong. At other times they will strenuously dissent. Capabilities alone, therefore, do not bear the explanatory burden that Kagan places upon them. Moreover, a much simpler explanation suggests itself. Europeans no longer feel that the United States is protecting them from a dangerous threat because the likelihood of a military invasion from the East has disappeared. Without U.S. help, Kagan claims, Europe will be unable to prevent itself from "being overrun, spiritually as well as physically, by a world that has yet to accept the rule of 'moral consciousness.'" But who, exactly, is about to overrun Europe "spiritually as well as

militaristic Germans into harmless merchants and civilians. Perhaps bitter memories of *Machtpolitik* and chauvinistic militarism have dampened the European appetite for war. Perhaps other Europeans continue to fear that Germany's homicidal impulses could be reawakened in a remilitarized Europe. Perhaps the successful experience of building the European Union has given the Europeans an illusion that similarly legalistic methods could be used to fashion a new global order. Perhaps Europeans are simply free riders, smartly purchasing domestic tranquility by generous social spending in the expectation that American taxpayers will foot the bill for European security. Perhaps they are simply unable to switch quickly from the posture of territorial defense to which the United States assigned them during the Cold War to a policy of force projection, which is what it would take to compete militarily with the United States today. Or perhaps the European population is simply aging, its animal spirits waning, a process of decay witnessed in zero or even negative population growth. Kagan rehearses these various factors but provides little guidance about how to interrelate or weigh them.

But the real weakness of his argument is something else. However we may explain European criticisms of American policy, it is unreasonable to suggest that the French, say, disagree with U.S. foreign policy because they are pacifists. The French are not busy watering tulips in their walled gardens; they are out there in the "jungles" of the Côte d'Ivoire. Kagan even admits that French and British (and even German) militaries are willing to absorb more casualties than their American counterparts, suggesting again that his contrast between American "men" and European "women" is eye-catching but bogus.

Kagan informs us repeatedly that "the new Europe really has emerged as a paradise ... freed from the laws and even the mentality of power politics." But what Europe is he talking about? Algerian youth in the *banlieues* of Paris have little experience with the humanitarian softness of the French police. Elected officials in Poland or Hungary will not agree that the new Europe is a realm rinsed free of power asymmetries where all peoples are treated equally under law. One source of Kagan's comprehensive

## America's military power does not just enable the United States to see threats more clearly, it is a warped lens distorting our vision.

tionally charged mythology with which he decorates it. Just as prewar German nationalists loved to oppose *Helden* to *Händler* (Teutonic "heroes" to English "merchants"), so Kagan enjoys contrasting masculine Americans with effeminate Europeans: "Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus." Gun-shy Europeans are able to putter around their Kantian garden only because lethally armed Americans are out there patrolling the Hobbesian jungle to prevent the "post-historical paradise" from being destroyed by various ayatollahs, Saddam Husseins and Kim Jong IIs. Kagan brings his gendered interpretation of United States-European Union relations to a surprising culmination when, in his final paragraphs, he reinvents himself as a marriage counselor, urging the quarreling couple to kiss and make up, for their own sake and the world's.

This is amusing, in its way, all the more so because it is basically unserious. Unfortunately, Kagan's more sober attempt to trace trans-Atlantic discord to differences in military capacity founders

physically"? There may be a good answer to this question, but if Kagan knows, he isn't telling. Lack of a clear and convincing answer to the "What military threat?" question explains tensions in the alliance more economically than differences in military capacity.

### THE EUROPEAN ENIGMA

But even if Kagan were right that different levels of military preparedness necessarily give rise in Europe and the United States to differing assessments of threats, how does he explain the vastly different levels of military preparedness? Europe is rich enough to be a military superpower, so why have European nations been so reluctant to increase their defense spending or even to assemble on schedule their much-discussed rapid-reaction force?

Kagan's answer to this critical question is a blur, partly because he cannot consistently invoke the objective disappearance of a shared military threat. Perhaps the United States after World War II successfully retired Europe from world history, reprogramming the once-

confusions is his odd tendency to treat law and force as antonyms. He knows that law is useless without enforcement, but he does not think through the implications of this simple truth. Contrary to his repeated claims, moreover, law does not erase asymmetries of power. The pervasive favoritism of every known rule-of-law system suggests that law expresses and stabilizes asymmetries of power. (Because no party is strong enough to rule without a degree of voluntary cooperation, law often stabilizes asymmetries of power by moderating them to some extent.)

This tendency of law to look favorably on the interests of the powerful explains why, from Nuremberg to the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia, the United States, as the world's leading power, has been the champion of international law. That would be incomprehensible if law were simply a shackle placed by the weak on the strong. The United States created the current international legal regime and has used it for half a century to its own and its allies' advantage. The current crisis over Iraq came about not because the Europeans were trying to hobble U.S. sovereignty by imposing international law but rather for the opposite reason. Americans could not persuade Europeans in the 1990s to take international law (in the form of UN resolutions) seriously. In other words, the Iraqi crisis itself reveals the hopelessness of a stylized contrast between Europeans living in a Kantian world of reason and rules and Americans living in a Hobbesian world of force and fraud.

### THE MILITARY LENS

The book's basic argument keeps crumbling under inspection because it rests on a sleight of hand. Its elementary fallacy lies in a *selective* application of its theoretical premise. A country's foreign policy can become unrealistic if specially favored instruments prevent policy-makers from facing up to threats that must be addressed by other means. From this true premise, however, we cannot infer, as Kagan does, that Europe's meager military capacities make European assessment of threats unrealistic while the United States' formidable military capacities make American assessment of threats realistic. The illusions of the jungle are no

less pernicious than the illusions of the garden. Kagan touches on this point when he allows, "The stronger may, in fact, rely on force more than they should." But he does not integrate this insight into his basic argument. Indeed, he devotes no attention at all to the role of irrationality in the making of American foreign policy, even though he knows full well that a missionary impulse pervades Washington's understanding of the United States' global role, spoiling his clean contrast between realistic Americans and utopian Europeans.

A militarily weak society will typically underestimate problems that can-

threats facing the country. Acute problems that cannot be addressed by a unilateral deployment of American military power (such as North Korea's horrifying slide toward becoming a serial proliferator of nuclear weapons) get much less sustained attention than problems (such as Iraqi noncompliance with UN resolutions) that can be addressed unilaterally and militarily. Oil dependency, underinvestment in foreign-language skills and global warming are three disparate examples of neglected national-security threats that are not made any less acute simply because they cannot be managed by unilateral military force.

Kagan's talk of American heroes



European idols: German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (left) and French President Jacques Chirac

not be solved by *civilian* means alone. Just so, a militarily powerful society will typically underestimate problems that cannot be solved by *military* means alone. Both mistakes are possible and both can be fatal, but Kagan pays attention only to the former. This is why, despite the occasional justice of his remarks about European self-delusion, he comes across more as a Bush-administration apologist than as a foreign-policy analyst. Are Paris and Berlin really more "in denial" than Washington? Do Europeans have a more distorted view of the contemporary security environment than Americans? Kagan thinks so, but he is wrong.

The United States' unrivaled military power is not just a "tool." It is also a warped lens distorting the way the Bush administration defines the direct

patrolling the Hobbesian world obscures these and other irrationalities that afflict George W. Bush's foreign policy. An ideological conviction that government is the problem and that laxly regulated private exchanges are the answer, for instance, has seduced the administration into thinking that rogue states are invariably more dangerous than failed states. As a consequence, Washington seems even now to be underestimating the threat of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction entering the clandestine arms market after Baghdad's centralized control is destroyed by an American attack and before our forces secure an Iraqi territory "the size of California" crisscrossed by well-developed smuggling routes. Deeply held Christian beliefs prevent the administration from grasping the



fatal threat posed to the United States by religious certainty. Myopic domestic lobbies, interagency rivalries and Cold War habits of mind all distort the administration's understanding of the current security environment. And so forth.

### EUROPE'S RELEVANCE

But the most striking and by far the most dangerous misperception afflicting Bush's approach to foreign affairs concerns the war against transnational terrorism. Kagan asserts that Europe "has had little to offer the United States in strategic military terms since the end of the Cold War." Widely shared inside the administration, this view is based on the premise that the "end of the Cold War did not reduce the salience of military power." Military power is just as central to American security today as it was during the Cold War—that is what Kagan would have us believe. And after the Cold War, "European military incapacity" means that our former allies have become almost wholly irrelevant to U.S. security. That is the assumption behind this book and, presumably, behind the unfathomably cavalier attitude of the Bush administration toward our European allies.

That this assumption is fallacious is the very least that might be said. The September 11 attacks were partly planned, organized and financed in Europe. The Muslim diaspora communities into which terrorist cells can invisibly blend remain the likeliest staging grounds for future al-Qaeda attacks on the United States. In other words, Europe remains a frontline region in the war against terrorism just as it was in the war against communism. As daily press reports also reveal, the European police have been acting in a perfectly Hobbesian manner, arresting scores of suspected terrorists. In other words, despite his pose as a no-nonsense realist, Kagan has apparently failed to realize the degree to which the contours of American national security have been redrawn since 9-11. The home front and the foreign front have now been disconcertingly blurred. National-security strategy must now operate in a domain where soldiering and policing have become of coequal importance. This profound change helps us understand the erroneous premise of Bush's foreign policy. In our new security environment, despite the prevailing

cliché, the United States is *not* the world's only superpower.

The war on transnational terrorism depends essentially on information gathering and policing, and in these respects the Europeans are anything but security pygmies. Their capacities to respond effectively to today's greatest security threats easily rival those of the United States. Europeans' linguistic skills and cultural knowledge alone ensure that they can make indispensable contributions to U.S. security. They can perform essential tasks of monitoring, infiltration, disruption and apprehension for which our own unrivaled military machine is patently inadequate. Dismissing the "platitude" that the United States cannot protect itself with-

out European help, Kagan announces that "the United States *can* go it alone." This is apparently the thinking (if you can call it that) behind the administration's mindlessly denigrating remarks about Europe. True, European leaders can sometimes be hypocritical and foolishly condescending. But let it pass. We cannot afford, for the sake of a frisson, to undermine American security by further poisoning relations with capable allies in a time of unprecedented national peril. ■

STEPHEN HOLMES, *the author of* *Passions and Constraint, The Anatomy of Antiliberalism and other books, teaches at New York University School of Law.*

## BOOKS

# Free Market Furies

BY SASHA POLAKOW-SURANSKY

WORLD ON FIRE: HOW EXPORTING FREE MARKET DEMOCRACY BREEDS ETHNIC HATRED AND GLOBAL INSTABILITY BY AMY CHUA • DOUBLEDAY • 340 PAGES • \$26.00

AMY CHUA'S NEW BOOK IS NOT LIKELY to receive a warm reception at the Department of State, the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund. For more than a decade, the received wisdom in those precincts has held that free markets and rapid democratization represent the one and only legitimate path to economic development. Turning the Washington Consensus on its head, Chua contends that the simultaneous introduction of unfettered free markets and rudimentary democracy can lead to disaster in countries where small "market-dominant minorities" control a disproportionate share of the nation's wealth and arouse the vengeance of resentful majorities.

Chua's critique is all the more damning because she is not a flower-child, anti-globalization firebrand out to denounce the establishment. A former Wall Street lawyer, she's currently a professor at Yale Law School and a self-described proponent of free markets. Unlike such celebrants of the global economy as *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, or those on the left who reflexively denounce

globalization, Chua makes a nuanced but formidable argument about the potential dangers of the free-market version of democratic capitalism in the developing world.

To begin with, Chua suggests that the concept of "free-market democracy" underlying current development programs is an oxymoron. In many Third World countries, she argues, "Markets concentrate wealth, often spectacular wealth, in the hands of the market-dominant minority, while democracy increases the political power of the impoverished majority." Under the old order of crony capitalism, market-dominant minorities bought protection from corrupt, indigenous dictators such as Gen. Suharto in Indonesia. But now, Chua says, minority elites such as the Chinese in Indonesia (who make up 3 percent of the population but control 70 percent of the private sector), Indians in Kenya, Lebanese in Sierra Leone, Jews in post-Soviet Russia and whites in Zimbabwe are at the mercy of populist nationalist leaders. Under these circumstances, Chua warns, combining free markets

and democracy can become "an engine of potentially catastrophic ethno-nationalism" as "opportunistic vote-seeking politicians" arouse "a frustrated 'indigenous' majority ... against a resented, wealthy ethnic minority." In the worst cases, the Chinese in Indonesia, white farmers in Zimbabwe and Tutsis in Rwanda have become the targets of ethnic violence, property confiscations and even genocide.

Some of Chua's anecdotal case studies provide strong support for her argument. She notes that after Suharto's downfall in Indonesia, Chinese shops were torched, more than 150 women were gang-raped and Chinese capital fled Indonesia. Her account of Hutu power in Rwanda is also compelling. "Many Westerners ... insist that the horrors of Rwanda had nothing to do with democracy," writes Chua. "But the fact remains that a majority of the Rwandan people supported, indeed personally conducted, the unspeakable atrocities committed in 1994." The will of the resentful Hutu majority, she argues, ultimately manifested itself in the form of genocide against market-dominant Tutsis.

Other cases Chua cites, however, are more complex than she makes them out to be. Is democracy really the explanation for Zimbabwe's problems? Although Zimbabwe's black majority has a hypothetical stake in President Robert Mugabe's program of land confiscation and redistribution, blacks themselves have suffered the most under Mugabe's autocratic rule and would have likely ousted him in the March 2002 elections had it not been for massive fraud. And Chua's application of her market-dominance theory to the former Yugoslavia is even less persuasive. Though Serbs made up the largest share (36 percent) of the Yugoslav population and were less wealthy than the Croats and Slovenes, Chua does not explain why the comparatively poor Bosnian Muslims and Kosovar Albanians bore the brunt of then-President Slobodan Milosevic's genocidal fury.

Chua's theory becomes still more tenuous when she generalizes it to specific regions and then to the entire world. She argues that Israel represents a regional market-dominant minority in the Middle East and that the United

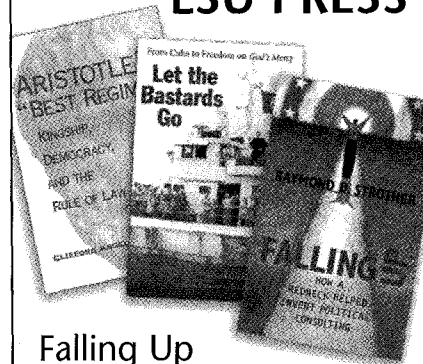
States occupies the same role on the global stage, thereby drawing the ire of poorer regional and global majorities. Although Israel's economy indisputably leads the region and the U.S. economy overshadows the world, it's a stretch to argue that anti-Zionism and anti-Americanism are byproducts of the same kind of ethnic envy directed against market-dominant minorities in Indonesia or Rwanda. Moreover, there is no global democratic polity through which these angry masses could express their will. Chua's theory is more convincing when applied to individual countries rather than the world at large. And her excessive reliance on anecdotal cases begs for a more systematic, statistical analysis of democracy's dangers in countries with market-dominant minorities.

As some critics have pointed out, many of the market-dominant minorities mentioned in *World on Fire* have existed for a long time; they did not develop as a result of the recent explosion of global commerce. But Chua may well be right that the simultaneous arrival of unfettered laissez-faire markets and the most rudimentary form of majoritarian democracy (without constitutional safeguards or minority protections) has further concentrated wealth in market-dominant groups while exacerbating majority ethnic resentments. Even if the pattern isn't universal, Chua has identified a major risk of the current free-market orthodoxy.

Chua's policy prescriptions include support for Malaysian- and South African-style affirmative-action programs, which, unlike parallel Western policies assisting minorities, spread benefits to disadvantaged ethnic majorities. She also calls for genuine, liberal democracy with protections for minority rights. Though Chua does not offer a comprehensive solution for the ills of global capitalism and occasionally overreaches in applying her argument, *World on Fire* deserves to be widely read. It is a welcome antidote to the recycled mantras of the market-cheering right and the tired rhetoric of the anti-globalization left. ■

SASHA POLAKOW-SURANSKY is a former Prospect writing fellow and a freelance writer who lives in Washington, D.C.

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# The Co-Presidency

BY E.J. DIONNE JR.

**BOY GENIUS: KARL ROVE, THE BRAIN BEHIND THE REMARKABLE POLITICAL TRIUMPH OF GEORGE W. BUSH** • BY LOU DUBOSE, JAN REID AND CARL M. CANNON • PUBLIC AFFAIRS • 256 PAGES • \$15.00

**BUSH'S BRAIN: HOW KARL ROVE MADE GEORGE W. BUSH PRESIDENTIAL** • BY JAMES C. MOORE AND WAYNE SLATER • JOHN WILEY & SONS • 400 PAGES • \$27.95

**THE RIGHT MAN: THE SURPRISE PRESIDENCY OF GEORGE W. BUSH** • BY DAVID FRUM • RANDOM HOUSE • 384 PAGES • \$25.95

IF KARL ROVE DID NOT EXIST, GEORGE W. Bush would not be president of the United States.

Surely this reviewer jests—or has been bamboozled by the premise of two of these books for which that idea is essential. Nope. Consider the sheer anomaly of two biographies of the president's chief political adviser appearing just two years into his boss' term. Roll over, Jim Farley. Start screaming, James Carville.

Rove is the essential man for many reasons. He was certain, utterly certain, about Bush's political potential much earlier than Bush was. "Bush is the kind of candidate and officeholder political hacks like me wait a lifetime to be associated with," Rove once said. This is not the usual consultant-strokes-the-boss quote. It's Rove's reality.

As James C. Moore and Wayne Slater make clear in *Bush's Brain*, the boy genius was just that. His practical and intellectual infatuation with politics began in childhood, and he always wanted to get to the top. The Rove of these books is aware of both his strengths and his limitations. The fact that Bush shares this trait with Rove is the key to their alliance.

Rove seems to have realized almost immediately that his own skills as a gut fighter, a visionary and a self-made intellectual were perfectly complemented by Bush's ease with people and his upper-crust connections. What Rove has never said—publicly at least—is that Bush badly needed his boy genius on absolutely everything when it came to the substance of politics: policy, strategy, tactics and, when necessary, a willingness to execute, without much

apparent scruple, whatever political attack was necessary. "Rove was cerebral; Bush never liked going too deeply into the homework," Moore and Slater write. "Rove had an encyclopedic mind and a gift for campaign arithmetic; Bush had engaging people skills, a knack for winning over opponents with pure charm. If Rove approached politics as a blood sport, Bush's instinct was to search out compromise and agreement." If ever a relationship deserved to be called co-dependent, this is it.

At the critical moments of Bush's political career, Rove did the requisite wire pulling, nurturing, maneuvering and tutoring to put Bush into position, first to run for governor of Texas in 1994 and then for president in 2000. And when Rove's Bush dream turned nightmarish after Sen. John McCain's (R-Ariz.) victory in the 2000 New Hampshire primary, Rove oversaw what Moore and Slater accurately describe as "two weeks of slaughterhouse politics" in the South Carolina primary. The man sent to the slaughterhouse in a campaign full of nasty innuendo and vicious whispers, of course, was McCain.

Moore and Slater tell of Bush trying to make light of the attacks when he met McCain before a debate:

"John," Bush said, "it's politics."

McCain snapped back, "George, everything isn't politics."

Another heroic Vietnam veteran, former Sen. Max Cleland (D-Ga.), might have said exactly the same thing on election night 2002.

That Bush always understood his need for Rove is proof positive, as Moore and Slater write, that Bush is "smart enough to know that he is not

smart enough." On this point, I prefer the formulation of Lou Dubose, Jan Reid and Carl M. Cannon in *Boy Genius*. They write, "If Bush is the virtuoso, then Rove is the composer." The pair's music now sets the tone of our politics.

THE STORY OF TWO GUYS WHO POOLED their virtues to take over a nation should be interesting enough to make the two Rove books worth reading. Moore and Slater have done an immense amount of useful reporting and provide many moments of vigorous writing. It's a shame they mar this helpful book with a brief excursion into foreign policy, citing Saddam Hussein's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz as if he were an oracle. Dubose, Reid and Cannon, meanwhile, offer smart political judgments and lovely anecdotes, particularly in their appropriately irreverent chapters on Texas' political wackiness.

The real virtue of these volumes, though, is that they help us get at the back story of what has happened to American politics since W. went national in 1999. Rove wants to turn the United States into a Republican nation for at least a generation by disabling the Democrats and creating an impregnable GOP machine. All the elements of his approach came together first in Texas.

Rove settled there after dropping out of college and spending some years as a Republican road warrior. He connected with the Bush family through his friend, the late Lee Atwater, who was also the first President Bush's campaign manager. Rove, the unapologetic nerd, learned a lot from Atwater, the free spirit.

There's much here on Rove the Rogue—for example, his relationship with an FBI agent named Greg Rampton, who had a thing for investigating Texas Democratic officeholders at miraculously convenient moments for the Republican candidates Rove was running against them.

There's Rove announcing in 1986 that his office had been bugged. By sheer chance, no doubt, he gave this news to the media the morning before a critical debate between Texas' Democratic Gov. Mark White and Republican Bill Clements, Rove's guy and the man expected to lose the debate. Democrats always

suspected that Rove had the bug planted himself, but they could never prove it. Clements won.

Here's Rove's style in a strategy memo he wrote to Clements during the White campaign: "Anti-White messages are more important than positive Clements messages. Attack, attack, attack."

Those last three words are straight out of the Catechism of the Bipartisan Church of the Political Consultant. But Rove and Bush perfected a division of labor between consultant and candidate during Bush's 1994 gubernatorial race against Ann Richards. "There were actually two campaigns against Richards, one in which Bush floated above the fray and another in which Rove targeted the Democrat's politics and gender," Moore and Slater write. "It was an arrangement that allowed Bush plausible deniability, no matter what. And it was a model of future Bush races: Bush traveling the high road, Rove pursuing the low."

Yet what makes Rove interesting is not his ruthlessness but rather his strategic vision and ability to execute. When Rove began plying his trade in Texas, it was a Democratic state. When he left for Washington in 2000, Republicans, most of them former clients of Rove's firm, controlled almost everything.

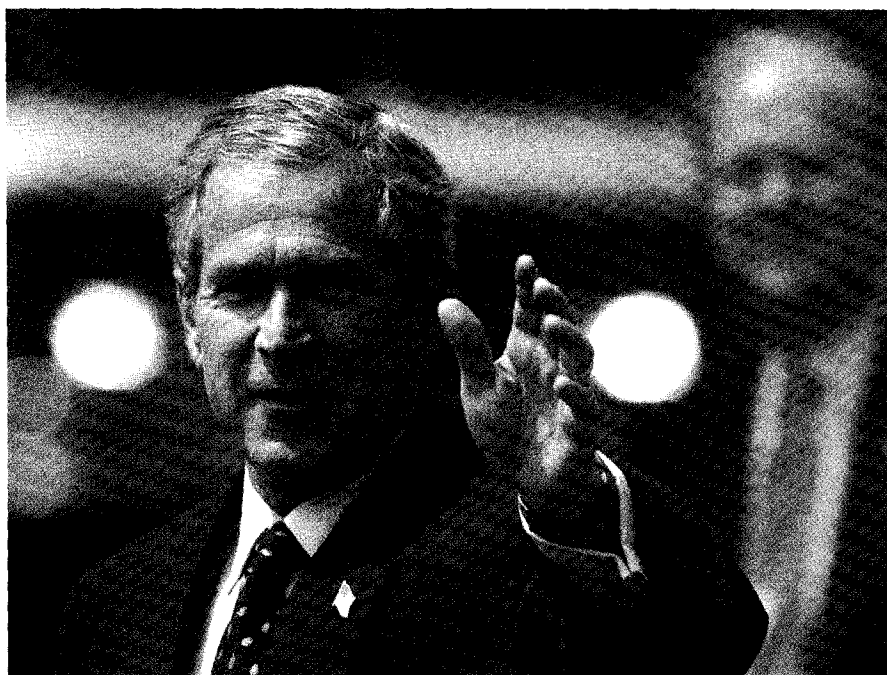
Rove's realignment of the state rested on the same principles he is currently applying to the nation. He turned the business class into a solidly Republican constituency, pushing its members to break their ties with Democrats. He made tort reform a central Bush issue. This made business groups happy and undercut trial lawyers, who were key to the Democrats' fundraising. And the man whose specialty was direct mail raised piles of money.

He also made the cultural conservatives a linchpin of Bush's constituency. "To govern on behalf of the corporate right, they would have to appease the Christian right," Dubose et al. write. "The marriage of the Christian conservatives had to be made to work if the party was to work."

Yet Rove always understood the importance of wooing middle-class voters who were not right wing. He wrote a memo to Clements in the 1980s that perfectly described the strategy he would later pursue for Bush. "The purpose of saying you gave teachers a record pay

increase is to reassure suburban voters with kids, not to win the votes of teachers," Rove wrote. "Similarly, emphasizing your appointments of women and minorities will not win you the support of feminists and the leaders of the minority community; but it will bolster your support among Republican primary voters and urban independents." Welcome to compassionate conservatism before it was cool.

Rove liked to quote Napoleon, especially the phrase, "The whole art of war consists in a well-reasoned and extremely circumspect defensive, followed by rapid and audacious attack."



If he only had a brain: George W. Bush, the vehicle for the Republican grand plan of Karl Rove (background)

There in a nutshell was the key to Republicans' strategy in 2002. Through what Robert L. Borosage has described as "political cross-dressing," they played smart defense on issues such as prescription drugs and then audaciously attacked on homeland security. It worked.

DAVID FRUM'S OFTEN SHREWD VOLUME *The Right Man* might well have come out of a Rove focus group. It is deeply sympathetic to Bush, giving it credibility with the large audience that buys right-wing books. But it has enough critical tidbits ("In private, Bush was not the easy, genial man he was in public.") to appeal to those who can't stand Bush. Frum offers nice sketches of his colleagues, though I regret to say he does

not get my friend John DiIulio right.

Frum is pro-Karl Rove and anti-Karen Hughes. He rightly sees Rove as the more intellectual and conservative of the two but underappreciates Hughes' value to Bush as the commonsensical non-ideologue who thinks a lot about all the souls who fall outside the Republican base. I can't help but wonder: Would Hughes have advised Bush to push for eliminating the taxation of dividends?

Frum's analysis of Bush as "the right man" is rooted in the president's performance after September 11. Before the terrorist attacks, he thought the administration was failing and wanted to

leave. "I had come to like Bush too much to want to be a tourist inside his White House as his administration unraveled," he writes of the summer of 2001.

This raises interesting questions about whether the Bush-Rove (or is it Rove-Bush?) strategy is as brilliant as we all think it is. If there's a flaw in Rove's view of politics, it's that he grants infallible status to the Republican base. This is a problem because the views and interests of the Christian right and the big-business right are not the views of the American majority. Rove, in some part of his being, knows that. Yet his default position is always to dance with the ones who bring him. Such loyalty is admirable in its way. It can also be blinding.

As I write, I can have no idea how



the conflict with Iraq will affect Bush's standing. I do know that where American politics is concerned, those who have been the victims of a "well-reasoned and extremely circumspect defensive, followed by rapid and audacious attack" ought, in principle, to be

able to learn from the experience. You wonder: Will they? ■

E.J. DIONNE JR. is a syndicated columnist for *The Washington Post* and a senior fellow at the *Brookings Institution*.

## BOOKS

# Bonfire of the Verities

BY MARK GREIF

COSMOPOLIS • BY DON DELILLO • SCRIBNER • 224 PAGES • \$25.00

EITHER DON DELILLO HAS WRITTEN his worst book or he's done something so sneaky I can't see it yet. *Cosmopolis*' tale of a new-economy billionaire who reduces the world's currency markets to rubble while crossing Manhattan to get a haircut relies on a premise no weaker than those found in some of DeLillo's 13 other novels. His triumphs have often had a seat-of-the-pants quality. This book, however, doesn't quite scrape through.

Wittingly or unwittingly, DeLillo has written a novel of the 1980s. Published in 2003, *Cosmopolis* opens with a warning that the story takes place "IN THE YEAR 2000: A Day in April." Tear this marker out, though, and you're left with a repetition of the major motifs of '80s popular culture and novels, without any assimilation of the truths of the recent *fin de siècle*: what was new about the new economy, how New York differed in 2000 from its earlier incarnations and what globalization has wrought.

New York City hasn't looked this bad in fiction since Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1987), back when Tompkins Square Park was a homeless tent city and not a hipsters' village green. Prosperous, optimistic, pre-September 11 New York is nowhere to be found in DeLillo's novel. Eric Packer, *Cosmopolis*' 28-year-old capitalist, is Gordon Gekko redux, updated from Oliver Stone's *Wall Street* (1987) with remote Internet access on his watch. The novel's aesthetic comes straight from the '80s, too: flat towers, stark art and minimalist furniture.

It's an any-city that DeLillo portrays,

or a no-city. All the signs point to a *Ulysses* in miniature: One man travels in one representative city in one day. But the metropolis seems small, and Eric creeps only a short distance. His destination is the old-fashioned barbershop on the block where his father grew up—a fortress of authenticity. He makes conjugal forays from the safety of his armored limousine, and has sex with everyone from his female security guard (whom he asks to shock him with a stun gun) to his wife. The city drops out of view completely, except for what comes from Hollywood. The book's climax occurs in a boarded-up Hell's Kitchen tenement of the sort rehabbed during the Giuliani years and turned into luxury duplexes.

DeLillo adds drama with the inevitable 1980s sociopathic turn. Eric will start killing people. Isn't that what you do when you're rich? Bret Easton Ellis mined this vein in *American Psycho* (1991), a book that's already dated enough to have become '80s camp in its movie adaptation. Meanwhile, as Eric's trigger finger gets itchy, other nutcases begin murdering financial wizards all over the world. Arthur Rapp, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, gets it from an assassin in North Korea. "He was killed live on the Money Channel," DeLillo writes. You can feel the strength of his cool language even in the midst of cliché:

Eric wanted to see it again. *Show it again.* They did this, of course, and he knew they would do it repeatedly into the night, our night, until the sensation drained out of it or everyone in the world had seen it, whichever came first,

but he could see it again if he wished, any time, through scan retrieval, technology that already seemed oppressively sluggish, or he could recover a slow-motion shot of the willowy woman and her hand mike being sucked into the terror and he could sit here for hours wanting to fuck her then and there in the bloodwhirl of knife and random limbs and slashed carotids, amid the staccato cries of the flailing assassin, cell phone clipped to his belt, and the gaseous bloated moans of the dying Arthur Rapp.

DELILLO'S LAST NOVEL, 2001'S *THE Body Artist*, hinted that the author was recharging his batteries. The changes seemed fruitful, a new departure. That book was a novella billed as a novel, something Henry James could have written if he'd lived a century later. It was a ghost story spun from a single conceit: that a husband who'd committed suicide could have his last conversations repeated verbatim by an autistic visitor, who'd been hiding in the man's house, to the grieving wife who wanted to hear them. It was better than its sounds—just as, say, *The Turn of the Screw* is better than its synopsis.

The wife, the novella's protagonist, also happened to be a performance artist who modified her speech and gestures in order to become other people. This was a book about art and embodiment, and about what it feels like to be one human in a small world of a few others. A reduction of means produced richer effects than DeLillo had achieved before. Purely interior and intimate, the beauty of the book came via its exact descriptions of eating, moving, breathing and thinking.

*Cosmopolis* is also a novella, but one that has overgrown its boundaries. At more than 200 pages, it could have been 100. DeLillo is still interested in the capacities of single minds to discern order. This had always been a topic in his earlier fiction, and the reason that he was lumped with the "conspiracy" or "systems" novelists of the American postwar era. The Eric character has a monomaniacal take on it: "When he died he would not end. The world would end." The intimate psychological turn of *The Body Artist* is in evidence here. But if Eric is the single artificer of the world, he relies too much on his intimacy with technological extensions of his consciousness. He finds in computer analysis, as of fi-

nancial markets, the essence of life, “the zero-oneness of the world, the digital imperative that defined every breath of the planet’s living billions .... Our bodies and oceans were here, knowable and whole.”

DeLillo’s strength in the past came from his ability to show the limitations of people trying to hold on to the patterns they craved. He stood characters on the pivot between sense and senselessness. There is a moment in *White Noise* (1985) when Jack Gladney, exposed to vapors from a toxic cloud, has his chances of survival calculated by an infallible computer. It concludes he’s already dead. That moment captured what it feels like to live enmeshed in numbers, patterns, algorithms—and still be able to look down at your two hands and see nothing changed. DeLillo wanted to know what it was like to be a statistical person, or a historical personage (as in *Libra* or *Underworld*), and still a living person.

*Cosmopolis* gets caught in high technology and stumbles. It gives up a human dimension. DeLillo allows his protagonist to make declarations such as “[i]t was almost metaphysics”—about his wristwatch’s “electron camera”—without cracking a smile. Dick Tracy had a neat watch, too, but that’s not the same thing as the foundation of philosophy. And this, disappointingly, becomes the basis of a renewed “consciousness” plot. *The Body Artist* looked at personal and timeless paradoxes of inner life, retreating from the social themes for which DeLillo is celebrated—a temporary retrenchment that *Cosmopolis* could have made good on. But the new book suggests that the media of surveillance and replication, the technologies of computing and the scale changes of global finance do something weird to experience. Eric watches himself on a camera and begins to see events that haven’t yet occurred. Instead of the intimate, we get the extrasensory. “A consciousness such as yours,” someone tells Eric, “hyper-maniacal, may have contact points beyond the general perception.”

One is reluctant to call Eric a consciousness, though. His is a deeply inconsistent but wholly loathsome character. And as if sensing that this line of quasi-philosophical explanation is going nowhere, the novel lapses from unexplained events into that oldest of

narrative tricks, the theology for which the novel was made—predestination—as first we, then Eric, begin to foresee his death.

THE TEXTURE OF THE NOVEL IS ITS most interesting feature. Characters appear and disappear. Eric’s route isn’t mapped and the chronology isn’t altered. Only one aspect of space-time is affected: The narration starts to take apart our experience of interior, of private spaces. Eric’s apartment unfolds, revealing a fantastic existence. We discover its expansion, as details grow like crabgrass: A rotating room erupts here, a shark tank there, and the apartment itself has “forty-eight rooms.” Eric’s limousine perfects this strangeness. Visitors stand up and leave it as if it were a bedroom. The floor is made of marble. The space contracts and widens.

There may be an argument to be made that the narration incarnates in its formal qualities the slippery nature

There were people approaching the car. Who were they? They were protesters, anarchists, whoever they were, a form of street theater, or adepts of sheer rampage ... It was a protest all right and they were smashing the windows of chain stores and loosing battalions of rats in restaurants and hotel lobbies.

Then the theorist gets to pronounce on them:

‘You know what capitalism produces. According to Marx and Engels.’

‘Its own grave-diggers,’ [Eric] said.

‘But these are not the grave-diggers. This is the free market itself. These people are a fantasy generated by the market. They don’t exist outside the market. There is nowhere they can go to be on the outside. There is no outside.’

What follows is the most lifeless riot scene I have read. These are magic anarchists. They can do anything. Television used to be a subject for DeLillo’s

## New York City hasn’t looked this bad in fiction since

### Tom Wolfe’s *The Bonfire of the Vanities* in 1987.

of global finance-capital. Certainly the tone differs from the bourgeois modernist novellas of a dream space or dream logic, of which Arthur Schnitzler’s *Traumnovelle* (the 1926 inspiration for Stanley Kubrick’s 1999 *Eyes Wide Shut*) is archetypal. The narration here has a disjointed rather than a dreamy quality. It undergoes tiny fluctuations, which the reader registers without emotion. Capital may feel like something—or it may not. But does it simply feel unmotivated, like this?

As for the politics of the novel, don’t even bother. You can’t doubt that DeLillo’s heart is in the right place. In the mouth of Eric’s “chief of theory,” however, a semi-academic named Vija Kinski, the book repeats watery versions of the stupidest analyses of the present, which are so unmindful of real conditions as to be neither of the left nor the right.

Fans of *White Noise* will remember that the theory specialist in that book was given the cleverest lines. This trick is a disaster the second time around. Anarchist protesters attack Times Square, and also Eric’s limo, with the theorist and the capitalist seated inside:

critical imagination. The extended scene in *Mao II* of the funeral of the Ayatollah Khomeini, seen on a TV set in New York, was unforgettable. Here DeLillo seems to have been captured by the ephemeral hysterical and already forgotten figures on his set. One of the great portraitists of the postmodern, DeLillo ends up accidentally illustrating the power of our era to turn writers into mere viewers.

When, in 50 years, the Library of America issues a volume titled *Underworld and Later Novels*, this contribution will exist for antiquarian interest. But it does nothing to diminish the sense that DeLillo still holds the stature of deserving to be read in 50 years. A bad book makes you dislike most novelists. This one, despite its faults, made me like DeLillo more. He attempted to think the present through, which is all we can ask of a writer. Sometimes even a master is caught in a back eddy of his own titanic project. May the next few years throw him a life preserver. ■

MARK GREIF is a Prospect senior correspondent.



# A Tale of Two Fables

BY ROBERT B. REICH

**Fable 1:** The world is blessed with an advanced civilization renowned for its dynamism and freedom. Most of the world's peoples admire and emulate it. But this civilization fails to notice a primitive, evil force that emerges worldwide, intent on destroying

it. Motivated by envy and hate, the evil force exploits the openness of the civilization to wreak havoc upon it. Only in the nick of time does the civilization find the strength and moral fiber necessary to destroy the evil and thus save humanity.

**Fable 2:** The world is ruled by a giant corporatist power that exerts control through technologies and materialist comforts. This sinister force acts to seduce, brainwash, monitor and intimidate the world's people. But a few descendants of a former, more spiritual world, hidden away in mountains and teeming cities, keep the old faith alive. Through their cunning and bravery, these outlaws discover weaknesses in the system, and they exploit those weaknesses to destroy it and thereby liberate humanity.

Whatever happens to Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, America's long-term security may depend more on which fable most people worldwide believe describes the future.

These are potent and dangerous fables. Each is animated by the righteousness of its cause and the conviction that survival depends on destroying the opposing evil. Each also offers a comprehensive narrative that explains all politics, economics and social change as aspects of a single drama played out on the world stage. And each fable reinforces its opposite: The more one is believed and acted upon, the more plausible its opposite becomes to those who are thereby threatened. And as those who are threatened act upon the opposing fable, they thereby confirm the fears of those who cling to the other.

By acting as if it believes Fable 1, the Bush administration is starting to convince many people around the globe that Fable 2 is closer to the truth. In its commitment to invading Iraq regardless of what most of its major allies believe to be necessary or prudent, its insistence on the right to move preemptively against any nation it considers potentially dangerous to American interests, its quickness to see terrorist links to al-Qaeda in almost any separatist or insurgent movement—in Chechnya, the Philippines, Colombia, Venezuela and many other hot spots around the world—and its assertion of American military power as the preferred method of dealing with instability, the administration is fomenting anti-Americanism almost everywhere outside the United States. In a matter of months the White House has undermined

NATO, severely jeopardized America's relationships with Europe, Japan and Latin America, and encouraged Arab and Islamic extremism across North Africa and Asia.

The point here is not to suggest a moral equivalency between terrorism and Bush's foreign policy but to understand why the administration's ham-fisted approach to diplomacy—you're either with us or against us—is playing into the hands of radicals who want the world to believe Fable 2. That a large and growing number of people outside the United States now tell pollsters America is a greater threat to world peace than al-Qaeda is evidence not just of the White House's inept communications but of its larger failure to explain and justify its actions to a world that had been largely sympathetic toward America in the months following September 11 but is now almost universally cynical about this nation's motives.

Not since the Vietnam War have we witnessed such a profound loss of faith in the moral authority of the United States. The consequences are potentially tragic. If we appear more like the world's bully than its beacon light, how can we count on our friends and neighbors to help us reduce the odds of further terrorist attacks here? If Fable 2 offers the world's destitute and angry a more convincing explanation for their condition, how can we prevent the ranks of terrorists from growing?

Equally worrisome is the possibility that Americans come to believe Fable 1, unleashing a new and more virulent xenophobia and jingoism. An American public scarred by 9-11 and fearful of future terrorist attacks is especially vulnerable to demagoguery about America's unalloyed virtue and a worldwide conspiracy of evil that threatens our survival. A similar narrative captured the American mind in the 1950s when communism seemed poised to obliterate us, but in the 1950s we hadn't been traumatized by thousands of civilian deaths on American soil. The consequences this time around could be a larger erosion of civil liberties at home and a more uncompromising militarism abroad that gives the rest of the world greater reason to believe Fable 2.

Extremists gain power when politics becomes polarized around opposite views of reality. As the two fables gain credibility among opposing camps, the world's single remaining superpower grows ever more isolated, and the world becomes an increasingly dangerous place. ■

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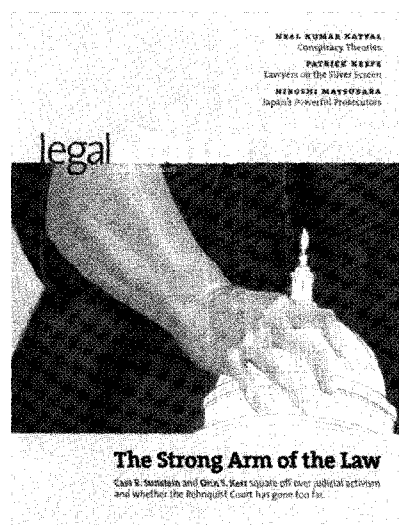
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